READ "RIVALS FOR WEALTH," WHICH WILL BEGIN IN NEXT WEEK'S LEDGER

THE CHICAGO LEDGER

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A SINNER'S SACRIFICE;

Or, THE MISTRESS OF RIVERBLUFF.

By ELLEN FRIZELL WYCKOFF.

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CHAPTER I.

From the shadows that hung about the northern side of the hill a figure came slowly into the moonlit road. It was the figure of a man, straight and strong. The head was bent and the man walked hesitatingly like one moved by a will outside his own body.

At the foot of the great, mountain-like hill a flat valley spread itself broadly to meet the trailing skirts of the mountains that rose in stately ranks toward the west.

In the flat valley and reaching up the hillsides lay an old, Southern town. Tonight, with the moon above it, the town was like a wonderful embossed picture in white and black. From masses of cloud-like foliage rose gleaming spires and dark chimneys. White houses shone like jewels in dusky garden settings.

The man's eyes passed slowly over the quiet beauty of the sleeping village and rested at last upon a snow-white, many-pillared mansion that perched like a giant bird on the broad shoulder of the mountain. Through the dusk of the valley, between bending willows and in and out among the streets and houses, wound a slender, shining river. In front of the white mansion the river broadened and a bridge crossed it. From the bridge a driveway followed the river around the curve of the hill, and terraces, broad and stately, led up to the wide marble steps.

The man's head was raised as he stood gazing at the picture before him. His whole attitude changed and he held out his hands with a gesture of silent yearning.

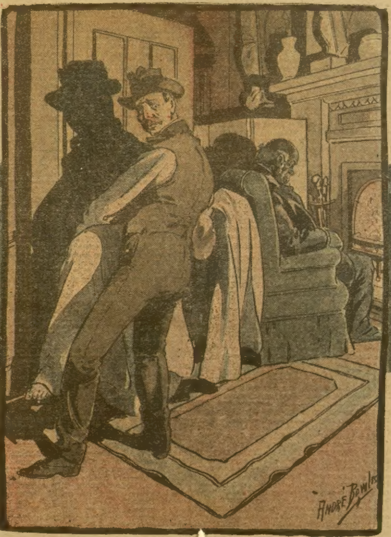
A mockingbird on some tall tree near him broke the silence that the chirp of insects and murmur of waters had only intensified. A clock down in the valley struck twelve. The man counted each slow, solemn stroke.

"Midnight! What a peaceful corner of the stormy old world! Ah, if I could come back and find the security of my boyhood waiting for me! I wonder what I shall find?" He laughed softly. "Money, I hope, since it is money that I am coming for. What a curious thing it is that Robert should live there in the old home, prosperous, successful, respectable, a good citizen, while I am a vagabond. And twenty years ago—only twenty years—we were as like as two drops of water from the same clear mountain spring."

He stood still, his head bowed again. Presently he walked slowly on like a man who sorely dreads his journey's end.

Along the quiet street of the village he went slowly. The breath of violets from many gardens sweetened the dewy midnight air. The ceaseless song of the narrow river came to him. With quickened step he reached the bridge that spanned the river. It was a stone bridge built so long ago that nature laid claim to it as to her own handiwork. Ferns grew rankly in the damp crevices and vines ran riot over the stone balustrades. From the dusky green of the vines moonflowers shone out in ghostly fashion. There was the smell of mint in the water-cooled air.

On the bridge the man stopped again, leaning over the balustrade. A faint odor rose from the crushed disks of the moonflowers.



He carried him to the little wine cellar.

"I wonder if it wouldn't be better to end it all here? If I were sure of anything like a chance afterward, if it were only just a chance not to know, not to be troubled. Why is it that a man must be pushed and driven and loaded and burdened by duty and circumstance? The bird over yonder, the river down here——" his low voice trailed off into silence and he stood looking down at the water as it slipped like a stream of molten silver from the shadow of the bridge.

"If I hadn't seen her, or if she had died some time, or if I hadn't loved her! If she'd go with me away from the world where men and women fight for such trivial things! Why can't we wander, hand in hand, quietly like this——" Then he threw back his head and laughed. There was something strangely sweet and tender in the sound, and a note, too, that was out of harmony with the low music of the early summer night.

"Alas, she isn't a gypsy maid, this fair Hellen of mine, though she played the role well enough before her company failed and left her without a place. And her throat—the fear of its failing haunts her. It was the death of the child at first—what a lot it costs to die! And yet we talk about slipping away! If we could—away from doctors who demand a price before they give us back to be folded to the bosom of our heartless old mother!"

He straightened himself and stood looking up at the white-pillared mansion.

"Twenty years! It looks just as it did when I crept away that summer night from the wrath of my kinsmen. Robert managed on his little money. His allowance was always sufficient. While I—it was debt that drove me to it, and it was so easy to write a name—a little trick of my right hand that turns so easily to wrong ways. Robert—my disgrace was his making, for the old man loved me best. He is the heir, I the vagabond outcast. Hellen is all that makes me care. She's tired and overworked. She'd like the comfort and luxury of Riverbluff. And if I were master up there what a queenly mistress she would be! And I was the favorite till—till debt drove me to—they called it forgery, and Uncle Jasper was so sternly, so uncompromisingly righteous. If Hellen could just see my old home! But how shamed she would be if she knew that I've crept back to beg charity of my brother!" His head and shoulders drooped weakly again. He covered his face with his hands.

It was the single solemn stroke of the clock in its tower behind him that roused the man again. The moon was slipping westward. Riverbluff lay in shadow. A cool, shivering wind brushed the water and swept through the valley, the moonflowers swayed weirdly. There was no sound of bird or insect. The world awaited the birth of a new day.

The man went swiftly across the bridge and plunged into the shadows. Where a wedge of light sprang from a broad, low window on the west side of the mansion he stopped.

"Robert is alone in the library. It is late for him." He went to the window and slipped his knife blade under the sash. "The same old broken fastening," he smiled as the heavy glass slipped noiselessly upward. Silently he stepped into the room softly closing the window.

It was a room with book-lined walls and heavy, handsome furniture. Across deep windows heavy curtains were drawn. Above the center table the gas burned in softly tinted globes, and a little wood fire, many hours old, whispered sleepily in a bed of downy ashes on the broad, blue-tiled hearth.

Deep chairs were drawn about the hearth, but none of them were occupied. A crushed lace-edged handkerchief on the table gave out a faint, jessamine-like odor when the breeze from the hastily-closed window reached it.

The man stood looking down at the bit of snowy cambric wonderingly.

Now that the gaslight fell upon him he looked worn and haggard. He was tall and finely formed, but there was a certain curious expression about him as if he hung halfway between reckless daring and pitiful shrinking. It was the expression of a man who had failed.

The head with its wealth of thickly frosted, curling dark hair, the face with its straight brows and fine dark eyes were noble and good to see. Above the mantel where the light fell fully upon it was a portrait so like the face that the man started when his eyes fell upon it.

"Robert!" he said, standing before the fire and looking up into the painted face.

In the picture the head was more sturdily set on the squared shoulders, the chin was firmer, the mouth harder, the eyes keener, the whole face more alert. It was still the same face, the same outline, the same moulding of feature and a different spirit.

"It is a difference of souls. The soul of a man lives in that body, of a vagabond in this." He turned from the picture and looked about the room. He had formed no plan. It had never been his way to plan. It was easier to let things happen.

But tonight a new spirit was alive within him. It had driven him to his old home. It had put into him a sort of energy. He had waked up to feel his wife's pressing need. He must have money.

The handkerchief again caught his eye. Whose was it? A woman's, but what woman's? He had always lived on the outer edge of his family; for twenty years he had been as one dead to his people. But the world is not so large a place after all, and news crosses the gulf that yawns fixedly between the saint and the sinner. He had never heard of Robert's marriage. One of his sins against his brother had been the winning away of his yellow-haired sweetheart back in the days when a laughing girl's kisses seemed worth while.

Had Robert forgiven his faithless sweetheart? The man in the library smiled. There had been only Hellen so long! The little loves that had teased him before the great one claimed him seemed so trivial now. Had Robert married Elsie after all, and was the little doll-like woman living here in the old house where Hellen might have been?

He heard the rustle of silken skirts in the hall. The old fear of his home and people, the fear that drove him forth twenty years ago, came upon him. He was used to hiding. It was a sort of second nature. Silently he slipped behind the heavy curtain that hung before the deep bay window. He sank wearily upon the window seat and looked out into the room through the parted damask.

Slowly into the room came a tiny, dark-gowned woman. Her hair was yellow and her eyes were blue, and her face was pink and white like the arbutus that blooms on the mountain sides at Candlemas. She moved with a pretty, fairy-like grace, but there was a nervous restlessness in her manner. She had the look of one waiting anxiously.

The man looked at her, leaning eagerly forward. This was Elsie Drake, but where were the footprints of the twenty years? And years pass so slowly and set their mark so painstakingly upon womankind! Even Hellen with all her beauty had not escaped. How had Robert's faithless sweetheart slipped unscarred from the clutches of cruel old Time?

Then the alert raising of the yellow head brought him knowledge of another approach. There was the ring of a quick footstep in the hall.

Why were people astir in the old house at this hour of the night? Was it Robert's step, a little heavy and lagging now that he was older? The man's heart bounded like a boy's. He found the desire to see his twin brother strong and fresh within him. Years, disgrace, estrangement vanished. He was going to see his brother again. He stood up, ready to leap forward. But the opening door revealed a stranger.

A stranger? Well, no. This was Bob Black, the druggist's clerk, grown old and bald and wise in twenty years. Ah, yes, it was Bob with a little senile crack in the smoothness of his professional voice and a fatherly, patronizing softness in his old-time gay manner. And there was something else. The man behind the curtain felt his heart beat heavily.

"How is he?" It was Elsie's voice with a ring in it that used not to be there.

"Well, Miss Elsie," the rubbing of his two fat hands and the raising of his two shaggy eyebrows convinced the silent watcher that this was the country doctor making a professional visit to Riverbluff. But it might be that old Cupid was ill. He was sure that the war had not driven the old servants away. But the doctor had rescued a glowing hickory coal from its grave of snowy ashes and was speaking again.

"I don't like these sudden attacks. I will be frank with you. I don't like them. The case puzzles me. I've begged him to see a heart specialist. He can't be made to realize the danger. He has sent for John Quill to come out in the morning; he should have had him tonight."

The girl leaned closer forward and laid her hand on his sleeve. "Tonight? Is he then so dangerously ill? And Mr. Quill—that means——"

"He's been talking about Albert, the scapegrace brother, you know. They used to be as like as two peas. Poor Albert! he was the devil's own prey. Haven't heard of him since he ran away from home. His name was never mentioned here. But our viewpoint changes wonderfully toward the end.

"Well, my dear, I shall have to go. A very sick man is waiting for me down at Perry's Bend. I shall send out a nurse in the morning. In the meantime, am I to leave you in charge? Cupid is too old and too sleepy, and Mrs. Sylvester's head is at its old tricks. Mallard—is Dick at home?"

The man behind the curtain started. Dick—Dick Mallard here! He had lost him with many other friends as he and Hellen had gone farther into the obscurity of poverty. Dick Mallard, the man who had come near winning Hellen in the old studio days—how came he to be here, at home at Riverbluff?

Then Elsie answered the doctor: "No; he has been down in the city at work in his studio for a week or so. He may be coming at any time; his movements are always uncertain. But tonight you must trust Mr. Groves with me. Morning will soon be here."

"In a few hours." Then the doctor wrote busily. The man behind the curtain thought he heard a step in the hall. But the door remained closed.

"My directions are written here. Follow them. In ten minutes he must have the heart stimulant. Then milk and brandy in the order marked here. Now I must go."

BOTH JAWS SHOT AWAY

Still a Successful Business Man.

A man who had both jaws shot away had trouble eating ordinary food, but found a food-drink that supplies the nutriment needed. He says:

"I have been an invalid since the siege of Vicksburg, 1866, where I was wounded by a Minie ball passing through my head and causing the entire loss of my jaws. I was a drummer boy and at the time was leading a skirmish line, carrying a gun. Since that time I have been awarded the medal of honor from the Congress of the United States for gallantry on the field.

"The consequences of my wound were dyspepsia in its most aggravated form, and I finally proved ordinary coffee was very hard on my stomach, so I tried Postum and got better. Then I tried coffee again and got worse. I did this several times and finally, as Postum helped me every time, I continued to use it, and how often I think that if the Government had issued Postum to us in the Army how much better it would have been for the soldier boys than coffee.

Coffee constipates me, and Postum does not; coffee makes me spit up my food, but Postum does not. There is no doubt coffee is too much of a stimulant for most people and is the cause of nearly all the constipation.

"This is my experience, and you are at liberty to use my name." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Look in each package for the famous little book, "The Road to Wellville."

The girl stood alone before the dying fire and the man behind the curtain watched her. The clock on the mantel ticked loudly. She sat down and covered her ears with her hands. He saw that she trembled when the clock struck two. But she did not rise and the clock ticked on and on. The ten minutes grew and doubled and minutes multiplied themselves as the hour receded into the past. But the girl still sat before the white ashes.

Then the curtains parted and like a shadow the man stole through the room, out the open door, across the silent hall and up the broad old stair. He remembered the step that creaked and missed it as he used to do in the old days.

Under a closed doorway slipped a faint glimmer of light. The room to which this door belonged used to be Uncle Jasper's. He had crept past often in the old time long ago. Even now he stood shivering with the tiny wave of light moving at his feet. But he remembered that the summer nights were always chill here in the Southern mountains.

His hand trembled on the knob, but he turned it and went slowly in. He wanted to see his brother before the girl came. He must get the money. Hellen's need was great. And the doctor had said strange things.

CHAPTER II.

It seemed to the man as he entered the silent chamber that the chill of the night went with him. A fire burned in the deep fireplace and a little shining copper kettle sung drowsily on the trivet between the tall andirons. In a chair at the corner of the fireplace sat old Cupid, his woolly gray head on his breast, fast asleep.

At the other end of the room a candle, burned almost to the socket of the silver candlestick, made a faint splash of light in the gloom. The wind through an open window caused the flame to flicker and the splash of light moved weirdly.

A great bed with drawn silken curtains stood out from the end of the room. Toward this the man went hesitatingly, and yet with a certain eagerness. With trembling hands he put back the curtain.

"Robert!" he called softly, waiting for an answer.

"Robert, speak to me. It's Allie, don't you know? They say you feel more kindly toward me now. Robert!" His hand went out tremblingly to the hand on the snowy counterpane, then with a low cry he snatched the candle and, pushing the drapery of the bed aside, bent over the silent form.

"Too late, too late! Robert, I am too late!" The face on the pillow was terribly quiet. The open, unseeing eyes were unmoved by pity or by the old look of contempt.

The man with the candle in his hand stood quietly looking down. In the head of the bed a mirror was set like a panel in the rich mahogany. Something drew the eyes of the despairing man to his own reflection in the clear dark depths of the glass.

"Too late, too late! The last chance is gone," he said, as he gazed at the expression of despair in his own eyes.

And then he started and looked again, first at his own face and then at his brother's. How alike them were! If—if he dared!

He set the candle in its place and let the curtain fall. Yes, if he dared! And what was there to risk? Was he not now at the end of all things?

Cupid snored in the chimney corner. The hall clock struck three. And then—yes, it was a hurrying footfall on the stair!

For the second time tonight the man slipped behind a curtain and waited. It was Elsie who came in, her pretty face white, her eyes wide and frightened.

"Mr. Groves, I—I—oh! answer me, tell me that you haven't needed——" She pulled the curtain away and let the candle light fall upon the bed.

"He's asleep," she said in a low, shuddering undertone. "I know he's asleep. Wake, Mr. Groves, it is I, Elsie, come to give you—to give you—— Oh! my mother, what have I done? I promised you to take care of him, and I have murdered him for the sake of——" She looked at the dead face with a strange, awful calmness. "And he was always good to me—always from the time he married my poor little mother and brought me here. I must be dreaming." She put her hands to her head with a childish gesture. "I must be dreaming." She turned from the bed gropingly, and her eyes fell upon the old negro sleeping in the corner with the bright singing kettle at his feet.

The girl's manner changed. She threw out her hands and gasped for breath as she staggered out into the hall. There was the sound of a falling body, then all was still.

The man behind the curtain looked out. Cupid was sleeping quietly, undisturbed.

The man sprang across the room and closed the door. His teeth were set, his eyes wild. A new and terrible strength was upon him.

He opened a closet and, pushing aside such articles as lay upon its floor, felt for a spring that used to be there. Ah! he had not forgotten. The trap door opened. A tiny ladder way led down to a little secret vault where Uncle Jasper used to keep his choicest wines. He knew the place well. He remembered the day when he discovered the old man's secret. He ran lightly down the ladder now. The old vault was empty except for the cases in one corner.

When he went up to the room again the candle had burned out. With hands made deft and strong by the new spirit that had taken hold of him, he unfolded the soft dressing gown from the stark form on the bed, and, wrapping it in a linen sheet, carried it down through the trap door to the little wine cellar far below.

With hands that had no sensations in them he closed the trap and shut the closet door, carefully locking it. He had left his own thread-bare garments in the vault and now, wrapping the dressing gown about him, he sank down exhausted upon the bed.

Would they know, would somebody be able to find out this thing that he had done? As we think of trivial things in hours of great stress he remembered that his brother's face had been newly shaven, while upon his own the beard was several days old. Would they notice that?

Old Cupid moved in his chair. Down in the barnyard the fowls were stirring. A cock sounded the first clear note of the music of a new day. Cupid stood up, stretching his crooked old form. Then, remembering why he was here, he hurried to the bed. His master lay ghastly and shivering under the downy coverings.

"Why, Marse Robert, you's bettah. You had a pretty good night. Ain't you feelin' right smart dis mawnin'?"

"Shave me!"

Cupid brought water from the copper kettle and deftly executed the command.

"I knowed Marse Bob done got scared. Can't fool ole Cupe, Marse Robert. I seen you wa'n't gwinter die. I watch you mighty close all de night long—mighty close, Marse Robert, an' you's bettah. I 'low you's a heap bettah."

The master made no answer. When Cupid had finished his task he went briskly about setting the room to rights, and his master, shivering and horror stricken, covered his face with the bedclothes, afraid of the new day that was dawning and of the eyes that would look down upon him through its clear light.

And then a cry loud and piercing sounded through the house; for one of the maids on her way down to her work had stumbled over the prostrate form of Elsie outside the master's door.

Cupid hurried to join the gathering household.

Through the open door came the sound of a strong, fine voice. "Close the door, Cupid. Your master must not be disturbed. Elsie has fainted, Mrs. Sylvester. She must have been watching all night. Let me carry her in." And then Cupid closed the door.

"Marse Dick come in the night. Miss Elsie she done serter fainted, she's that uneasy about you," Cupid said to his master.

"Go at once and tell her that I am better." Cupid stumbled along the hall. They had placed Elsie on the housekeeper's bed, and the housekeeper, tall and gaunt and very pale from her headache, stood over the girl with camphor bottle in hand.

"Oh, oh!" came shudderingly from the girl's white lips.

"There. She's coming to nicely, Mr. Mallard. She will be glad to see you later on. We're having a hard time. The master's down again, worse than ever. You heard about that. The doctor thinks——"

"Hush! Elsie, Elsie, are you better now?" Mr. Mallard knelt beside her, gently rubbing her limp hands. "Will Dr. Black never come? Elsie, little woman—more of the brandy, Mrs. Sylvester. There! Elsie——"

Suddenly the blue eyes flew open. "I—he—he's dead!" she whispered shudderingly.

"You've been dreaming. Don't be frightened. There, you are better now."

A sudden light flashed into her white face.

"It—it is you!" she said breathlessly.

"Yes. I slipped in last night. I wish I had known that you were sitting up. They must never make you head nurse again." The handsome man laughed in pleasant fashion.

He was big and blonde and good to look at. His lips were made for smiling and his eyes for the seeing of beauty. For he was an artist. He was Elsie's cousin and her guardian and protector until her mother came to Riverbluff. After that he had been considered one of the household, though his absences were long and frequent.

"Dick, do you know—has any one told you? He is dead!" she looked at him with wild, dark eyes.

"Not a bit of it. You've been dreaming."

"But he is. I saw him. He is dead."

"Here's Cupid. Say, Cupid, how is your master?"

"Bettah, sah. I'se jes' shaved him an' he's bettah." Cupid pulled his gray foretop. "He done sent special word ter Miss Elsie, sah. He's bettah."

The girl looked bewildered. She was still very weak. Her thoughts floated from her like thistledown in the wind.

"Dick, will you go? I tell you I saw him dead—dead——"

"Asleep, little woman, only asleep. You were nervous. But I'll go. A little more of the brandy, Mrs. Sylvester." He went out, passing Dr. Black in the hall.

"Been in to see Groves. Was never more surprised," the doctor said, shaking hands cordially. "Strange case, Mallard. I would not have given a shilling for that man's life at midnight, and now—but I must see Miss Cameron."

"Just keep her quiet today, Mrs. Sylvester. She was a bit frightened and dreamed a bad dream over her watching. But she did her duty well for all that, for my patient is astonishing me this morning. I hardly know how to account for it. Really, Mallard," as the two men met again on the stair, "really, if I believed my ears I'd say the man has literally found himself a new heart. I don't know whether I seem to be praising my medicine or decrying my skill, but I am thinking this morning that my diagnosis has been all wrong and that I am dealing with some subtle, obscure nervous disease that takes on many phases."

John Quill's slim, black, raven-like figure appeared upon the bridge as the two men stood together on the terrace.

"Groves was all right. He didn't need John Quill last night. I don't believe he'll need him for many a day. A man is not old at forty-five. He may change his mind and his will many times after that."

"His will? Mr. Groves has made his will."

"Yes, but he's been thinking of Albert. You have heard of the family black sheep?"

"I knew him," Mr. Mallard said quietly.

"Ah? Well, Mr. Groves is softening toward him. They were too hard on the boy, no doubt about that. Wonder where he is?"

"I knew him in New York fifteen years ago. He has drifted to the bad, I fancy. Strange how like him this prodigal brother is." Mr. Mallard smiled.

"Nobody pretended to know them apart when they were boys. But as they grew older the task was easier. They were different men living in houses just alike. The outside of a house, somehow, shows the character of its inmate. The soul shines through."

"Not always, doctor. There's paint, you know."

The doctor laughed and, going down the broad steps, shook hands with John Quill.

The lawyer was tall and thin and his face was wrinkled and brown as his rolls of parchment. His lips were thin and his eyes were sharp and keen.

The big, fair man looked after him as he went, in his slipping, gliding fashion, through the dewy beauty of the early summer morning from his office in the village to Riverbluff, but he had brought nothing of all the wealth of loveliness with him, neither in look nor manner. Everywhere and always he was the same intent, preoccupied, sharp-eyed, withered creature.

With his black box in his hand he went up unannounced to Mr. Groves. He had been called. It was his business to obey.

The man shivering under the bedclothes opened his eyes to find the black figure, like an uncanny bird of prey, bending over him.

"You sent for me?"

"I'm ill." He shrank from the keen eyes that were trained to bore after secrets.

"I know that. You wanted to alter the will?"

"Not now."

"I wrote the letter as you ordered."

"Well."

"I have the answer."

"Well."

"Shall I read it?"

"If you will."

The lawyer unlocked and opened the black box. "I wrote her, very carefully, all that you directed. It has hardly been more than a week ago, but the answer came last night. She is a woman who knows how to make up her mind." The lawyer's wrinkles deepened. He had smiled.

The man under the bedclothes moved uneasily, then closed his eyes.

"Of course, I brought her answer to you unopened. Are you well enough to read it, or shall I do it for you?"

"Read the letter."

The early sunshine streamed in at the open window. The man on the bed shrank from it. The lawyer tore open an envelope and spread out a thin, rustling sheet of paper.

Cupid brought a glass of wine. His master swallowed it.

The lawyer read:

"'NEW YORK, April 17.—Mr. Robert Groves.—Dear sir: My husband has been absent for some time. Not knowing his present address, I cannot, of course, consult him. But I feel that he would approve this plan of yours, that he will thank you when he knows of your generous offer. I thank you and shall prove to you my appreciation and gratitude by coming at once to Riverbluff. When I see you face to face I shall be able, I think, to speak words to you that are not fitting in a letter like this.'"

The lawyer looked up. "So she is coming," he said.

The man on the bed kept his eyes closed. He was trying to think. "Is that all?"

"All except the signature."

"Read that."

"'Gratefully, Hellen Groves,'" the lawyer read quietly.

"Hellen—you—heavens, man——"

"He's gwinter go inter one of them spells, sah," old Cupid said, edging his way between the lawyer and his master. "Han' me the fan, ef you please, sah. Now he's comin' roun' all right. Hit ain't gwinter be a bad one, this time."

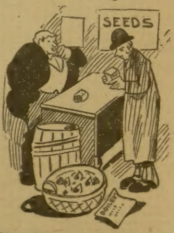
"That—will do. Go, now. The will—can wait." When the thin black figure slipped through the door the man in the bed sprang up. "Hellen—Hellen here!" he said huskily.

Another installment of this highly interesting story will appear in next week's Ledger, leading to some very remarkable developments. The free premiums of cameras and patterns are still offered to all subscribers as announced on pages thirteen and fifteen.

Guide to Big Crops.

1,000 copies of "Farmers' Weather Guide to Successful Crops for 1904," (64 pages) regular price 25 cents, reduced to 13 cents each. Based on DeVoe's Special Weather Forecasts for North Atlantic States, South Atlantic States, Ohio Valley States, Mississippi Valley and Gulf States, Missouri Valley and Upper Lake Region, Pacific Coast States, and DeVoe's General Weather Forecasts for the United States and Canada and applied in practical way to crops of each section of country. Remit 13 1-cent stamps. Order today. Address Devoe's Weather Guide, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Fair Dealing.



Mr. Subbubs—Is this grass seed good?

Dealer—Say, if that seed doesn't grow you just bring it back and I'll give you some fresh.

THE TUG OF WAR.

It chanced one sunny day in spring,
When every little feathered thing
Looks out for all that can be pressed
Into its service for a nest,
Two birds at the same instant found
A piece of wool upon the ground;
"'Tis mine!" cried one; "Mine!" cried the other.
One angry speech led to another,
Till seeing that all argument
Was quite in vain, each bird, intent
On gaining what he thought his right,
Tugged at the wool with all his might.
And now began a trial of strength;
Apart by just the worsted's length,
They tugged and tugged, yet tugged in vain,
For neither could advantage gain.
Then, when it seemed nor night nor day
Would see the ending of the fray,
The wool itself thought strife should cease,
And, breaking, gave each foe a piece!
But since it happened one bird fell
And held the shorter piece as well,
The other boasted with a jeer,
"The victory is mine, 'tis clear!"
Forgetting that for its own sake,
The wool decided where to break!

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

Other Boys said "You cant do it"— I said "I can" Now I have a bank account

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A LEAP-YEAR LOVE STORY.

BY HENRY BURNS GEER.

Connie was in tears. She was very unhappy. She was in love. Her love was in secret; and another—a man she did not love—loved her. This man, her parents, her brother John, and her father confessor said she must, she should marry. Therefore, Connie wept tears of anger and resentment.

I was in trouble, too; because, like Connie, I was in love. This Connie knew, but she knew also, or thought she knew, that the object of my affections was five hundred miles away; and that I possessed not the means of lessening the distance between my absent love and I. In this Connie rejoiced, for she liked me; not as a lover, perhaps, but as a friend and confidant. She had told me the story of her sorrow, and I had sworn to help her to win the man she loved. Therefore, in Connie's lovely eyes—eyes that looked through beautiful drooping lashes not quite nineteen years old—I was a great man, quite a hero. Had I not, while standing with her in the grape-arbor, said to her: "We must flee, Connie, flee to—to the man you love. We must arrange it all beforehand for him to meet us in the woods by the bridge that lies just beyond the big field. He must have Father Bourke of the Hill Mission there; and then, Connie, in the presence of old Dave, your driver, I will give the bride away; Father Bourke will say the words that will unite you and Henri for life. Then we will all return home together. I shall tell your parents that it was all my fault, which they will surely believe, and they will forgive you and Henri, and all will be so nice. You will be happy then, Connie, and I will be happy too, for having been instrumental in your great joy."

Then Connie had placed her soft white hands in mine; and, looking sweetly and trustfully into my face, had said:

"It will not be necessary, Harry, that we—that I—should return at once. For I have money and jewelry. I have five hundred dollars in cash in bank in my own name. Besides, I have much more in what brother John calls 'negotiable paper.' Indeed, Harry, if my—my—husband"—here she blushed so prettily and looked so sweetly confused that I forgot for a time the love I had left behind me—"should prefer to go elsewhere and go into business, I could assist him greatly."

When Connie had finished this little speech, her cheeks were the color of the rosy red apples that hung basking in the sunshine in the orchard near by. Throughout her abundant dark hair there was a glint of gold. Her shapely neck was surprisingly fair. Her form was as well rounded as a model, and the look that she gave me was one of trustful pleading that went straight to my heart. Her very presence was a pleasure to me, and I rejoiced that she was by my side. I had loved another. I believed that I still loved the absent one. But this fair, sweet creature had cast over me a spell that I could not throw off. In truth, I was loath to try. But, even as I rejoiced that she was with me, there came a pang to my heart. Why should I let my thoughts dwell on her, and why should she advance to the place in my heart that held another—the image of my absent love. Did not Connie love another? Had she not frankly told me that she was in love, and had she not asked me to help her to win the object of her affections, despite the plans and purposes of those near and dear to her?

Aye, with my aid she should win him and wed him in spite of parents, priest and brother; claiming in this matter the God-given right to choose for herself. Was she not willing to leave all, to brave any danger to be with him? What sheer nonsense then for me to dare to entertain thoughts of her, other than such as any good friend to her might indulge in!

Indeed, her confidence in me had put me on my honor, and I felt a flush of shame—shame for honor's sake as respected her trust in me, and shame for my unworthiness of the love of the girl I had left behind me. However, I was human, mere flesh and blood, and I could not essay to still the sense of gratification her presence inspired; for, verily, she was one of the fairest of her sex. I turned to her.

"If Henri could only see you now!" I exclaimed, with a look of such genuine admiration that her eyes sought the ground. But it was for an instant only. She looked up again quickly, with a gleam of the serpent that tempted Eve, modified by the softness of the dove, in her dark, wine-colored eyes as she said:

"I am so glad, Harry, that you are here to see me."

Did she emphasize the word are, or did I only imagine it?

Connie was an Americanized French girl. Her parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were all pure French; but they had lived for an hundred years in the little French-American village that nestled at the foot of the hills, in the valley of the "Great Father of Waters," where Connie was born. She had all the fire and impetuosity peculiar to her race and sex in her makeup, combined with the good sense and independence of the American girl.

She had made up her mind not to marry a man she did not love, and she was right. I had told her so. Hence, she liked me and confided in me. I did not dare to hope that she loved me. In fact, I felt that I was wholly unworthy of her love. Her friendship of itself was a jewel that I prized most highly. To see her was to admire her.

"It does not matter where he is, Connie, he is a fortunate fellow; and I fairly envy him his good fortune."

"Hush, Harry! What would your sweetheart say if she should hear you talking thus?"

"She would say that, in view of the existing circumstances, my words are exceedingly mild and passionless."

I looked, then, at the apples on the trees. Some were beautiful in color and shape. Others were less highly colored, while still others were unshapely, as well as unsightly, and I said to myself:

"Why should I gather other than the choicest fruit, when it is before me?"

Verily, the devil was tempting me then.

Again I looked, and some of the apples that were on the upper branches—some that the sun had kissed the oftenest until their cheeks were the rosiest—some that the breezes had caressed the gentlest—these mocked me and said:

"You need not long for us, we are beyond your reach."

I looked at my fair companion with these thoughts uppermost in my mind, and my spirits fell. She was the choicest fruit in the upper branches.

Then Connie came close to me, and, taking both of my hands, said, with a look that fairly burned into my heart and melted to dross the image of my distant love:

"Come, Harry, sit down beside me here, and I will tell you more of my trouble and then of my plans."

And there in the arbor, sitting on a rustic bench with one of her pretty hands resting on my shoulder, and the other snugly enclosed between both of mine, with glances from her lovely eyes that thrilled my soul, Connie said to me:

"Oh, Harry, pity me! I am urged by my father, my mother, and Father Dupont, the temporal guardian of my soul, to do the thing that my heart abhors. I do not love him, and I will not marry him, rich and influential though he be. To make a free choice in this matter is my natural right. It is the right of every woman. I am resolved. I shall not sacrifice my womanly honor to a loveless union. In you I trust. I know that you are my true and honorable friend. We will do as you have said. We will go tomorrow night. I shall instruct my colored driver, David, to have the closed carriage at the head of the long lane that skirts the big field; at 9 o'clock. We shall meet at the Cathedral at half-past eight and walk to where the carriage will be in waiting. No one will suspect anything if they should see us together, for they all know that we are good friends."

"And Henri—will he be at the forks of the road, beyind the bridge? Give me his name and address, Connie, and I will see him the first thing in the morning, and tell him our plans, so that he shall be in waiting for us, with Father Bourke, at the appointed hour—midnight."

At the same time—shame on me!—I secretly wished in my heart that "Henri" was on the other side of Halifax, or some other remote spot. For Connie had told me that "Henri" was the name of the man that she loved, and would wed, the Lord willing—he and no other; but she had not imparted to me his surname.

"Henri will be there," she replied calmly; "once safely on the road, all will be well."

And then what possessed me? The sun, like a great ball of fire, was slowly sinking behind the hills. A gentle southern breeze was fanning us with its languorous warmth. The birds were gathering to rest for the night; while from out toward the fields came the slow, gentle tinkle of a cowbell as the creature browsed slowly along on her way homeward.

"Connie," I said, turning to her, "you are worthy the best and truest love of any man. You are too brave and true for many." Then I bent over and kissed her, forgetting in the bliss of the moment the joys of the past.

"Harry, Harry!" she cried, springing to her feet; "your sweetheart—your sweetheart! Remember her."

"Memory is flat and insipid compared to such delightful reality," I whispered as we walked slowly along the rose-hedged path, Connie laughing and singing as we went.

"I am happy now, Harry. Your presence always drives the sorrow and pain from my heart."

"If it were in my power I would banish it from your gentle breast forever," I replied, with a lingering look into her beautiful eyes—a look that she returned with one so tender and so sweetly impressive that it filled my heart with a desire to possess her; a wish that our pathway might always be the same—leading on and on between the roses.

"Harry," said she softly, but with more earnestness than the situation seemed to require; "Harry, if you and I should ever happen to be by ourselves, away from here, away from everybody—you away from your old love, and I there loveless—what then?"

Oh, what a great hope surged through my soul at her words!

I seized her hands with a fervor that startled her.

"Then, Connie," I exclaimed, "then I should love you with all my heart and soul, forever and ever!"

The smile she gave me was a smile of confidence and satisfaction—a smile of triumph. She saw further into the future than I did. To her inspired vision a happy ending was in sight.

* * * * * * *

The next night I was at the Cathedral, standing in the shadow of the great dome, as a small, shapely figure, clad in walking suit, jacket and closely-fitting hat, and carrying a small traveling bag in her hand, came rapidly down the street. It was Connie. I stepped out into the light of the stars, and she came over to me.

"Everything is ready," she whispered; "and oh, Harry, I am so happy!"

"So am I," I replied truthfully; "your high spirits are contagious, Connie. Besides, it always pleases me to see you happy."

Then we walked on in silence, Connie holding to my arm as trustfully as if we were going to high mass instead of a carriage in which to flee from home, parents and friends; to a lover that, perhaps, was none too brave or true. Her fearless spirit was to me an inspiration. Young and beautiful, carefully and tenderly reared, her every wish and whim gratified as a child, she had arrived at the threshold of womanhood to have the dearest boon of her heart denied her. Not her will as to whom she should wed, but the will of others. Against the robbery of her birthright—the evident purpose to barter her beauty of person and character for a mess of pottage—her proud and independent spirit had rebelled. She would wed. Aye; but the man of her choice only. And now, in the night-time, she was on her way to keep tryst with him. For her staff and support she leaned on the honor of one whom she had known less than two years.

Indeed, hers was a brave, a hopeful and a trustful spirit. And I said to myself, as I bared my head and looked into the starry dome above us: "May my heart break if it be not true; and may my right arm wither if it defends not, till the very last, this woman, young and fair, who has placed her honor and her good name in my keeping this night. So help me God!"

At the head of the lane we found the carriage and faithful old Dave, who grinned as he took off his hat and bowed his mistress and her escort into the vehicle, closing the door behind us and vaulting nimbly to his seat up in front. He needed no instructions. He had been well posted in advance.

As the carriage swung around the corner of the field, and the matched pair of black ponies struck off in a lively trot down the road, Connie drew her traveling bag out from beneath the seat, and, opening it as it rested in her lap, said to me:

"Look, Harry, this is mine. This carriage is mine, and so are the ponies. David is my servant, paid from my allowance, and subject to my orders at all times. We are not running off with anybody else's goods. I am old enough to make my own choice."

Then she blushed and looked down at the open satchel in her lap as she fingered the contents. Rolls of good currency, and heavy pieces of specie that gave out a yellowish cast in the feeble light that penetrated the glass in the doors of the carriage. I was speechless.

"And here—see these, Harry," she continued, as she opened a small casket that was in one end of the handbag, holding up a magnificent diamond necklace, bracelets and brooch; "they came from France. They were my great-great-great-grandmother's, and the eldest daughter of the eldest son has inherited them ever since. My father is the eldest son of his parents, and I am his oldest daughter."

"Connie!" I exclaimed, "why have you brought so many valuables with you tonight? They are worth thousands of dollars."

She looked up at me with a pained and reproached look, as she replied:

"Why should I have left them behind? They shall be my offering on the altar of love."

"Forgive me," I said gently.

She gave me her hand and we rode on in silence.

We had been driving for over two hours, and were out of the lane and well into the heavy woods beyond the big field, where the villagers raised their provender, their corn, potatoes, etc., when I thought I heard the sound of horses' hoofs on the hard road behind us. Old David heard it, too, and, leaning down close to the door, as Connie shoved it open a bit, he said:

"Mistress, thar's some one comin' behin' us."

"Whip up the ponies, David, until you get to the side road that leads to the right by the creek, and turn into it there, instead of crossing the bridge."

"Yes, 'um," he replied, touching his hat.

The noise of the approaching horsemen grew louder, and we could now hear their shouts behind us, as we sped along at a rapid rate toward the creek.

Connie had replaced the jewels in the satchel and locked it.

Presently we felt the turning of the carriage to the right, as old Dave swung around into the less used road, as instructed. There our progress, while almost noiseless in the fresh turf, was less rapid, as the road was new, and there were stumps to be avoided and overhanging limbs for Dave to dodge from his high perch up in front.

Our pursuers passed the new road and went on over the bridge, as we knew by the thunder of their horses' hoofs in crossing.

Then a thought struck me.

"Connie!" I exclaimed, "they will be sure to meet Henri beyond the bridge at the trysting place, and either persuade him to join them, or else they may frighten him so that he will not keep the engagement, I fear."

Then she turned to me, and, taking both of my hands, with the whole depth and strength of her womanhood, a love and faith that was stronger than death revealed in the look that she gave me, said:

"Harry—Henri—there is none other to meet."

"Connie! Connie! Do you mean that I am the—— Oh! tell me, do you love me, Connie?"

"Yes, Henri, you are the only man I love; and for love of you I have defied all—yes, all—and dared to run away with you in the night. It is leap year, you know. Am I forgiven?"

"Forgiven!" I cried, as a great wave of the sweetest joy surged through my soul and the old image in my heart disappeared forever. "Forgiven—yes; for I love you more than life."

A few minutes later I opened the carriage door and called to old David:

"Yes, sah," he answered to the summons, pulling rein and leaning down to me.

"Drive to the Courthouse at St. Marx, and then to Esquire Patterson's as fast as you can."

"Yes, sah," with another grin.

"And, David," cried Connie, "You shall be well paid for this night's work."

"God bless the young missus," said he, baring his head, and bowing profoundly. Then he gathered up the reins, and drove forward as fast as the road would permit.

Thoughts Upon Love.

Sincere, serious love is never love at first sight.

When one look—and the first one, too!—binds a man and a woman, you may be sure that one single word will soon be sufficient to unbind them.

Lasting love comes slowly, progressively.

Beauty is not the mother of love. On the contrary, it is often love which engenders beauty—gives brilliancy to the eyes, gracefulness to the body, vibration to the voice.

Love is the sun that hatches the flowers of the soul. The face, which reflects all the inner sentiments of the heart, betrays the love of its owner, and is beautiful.

Absence is a tonic for love only when men and women love with all their heart and soul. When they do not, the ancient proverb is still true:

"Far from the eyes, far from the heart."
—Max O'Rell.

When a girl angles in the matrimonial sea she is apt to catch a sucker instead of a goldfish.

A WILD WEDDING NIGHT;

OR

The Heiress of Halcyon Hall.

BY T. C HARBAUGH.

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CHAPTER IX.

"MISS BOTHWELL."

Don Luis Potosi and Marcia Gray in the house of the money queen?

What fate had brought them together, and did Doctor Crossley know of the presence of either when he engaged me as Mrs. Pattison's maid? These were questions I could not answer, and when I drew back from the top of the stair and withdrew from the vision of Don Luis' face I felt that I was to witness still more exciting scenes.

I was thankful that the distance to my apartment was not far, for my limbs seemed to weaken under me and when I had bolted the door I threw myself into a chair utterly exhausted.

After all, for a moment I thought, hoped, that I had been mistaken, that the fair musician I had seen was not Marcia, but doubts would vanish and the truth would insist on recognition.

There was little slumber in my chamber that night. I had too much to think about for sleep, and when I remembered that I was to meet Mrs. Pattison at seven in the morning for orders, I felt that I must pull myself together for a purpose.

At seven I was promptly below stairs.

I fancied that I did not show any of the excitement of the previous night, and when Mrs. Pattison swept into the parlor I gave a steady look.

For a moment she again looked me over and then took possession of a chair which must have been made especially for her figure.

"So you were once Miss Gray's maid?" she asked.

"Yes, madam. I was her maid up to the time of her strange disappearance."

"I seem to recall your presence in The Hall on the night of the tenth."

"I was there."

"Yes. Well, Miss Quigg, that is your name, I believe——"

"Miss Lucie Quigg."

"Doctor Crossley has recommended you and he says you are secretive and faithful."

"I hope I shall not disappoint the doctor."

She gave me another scrutinizing look then glanced toward the door."

"I have a special service for you," said she. "I have in my house just now a guest whom I want you to attend."

My heart went into my throat. Was it Marcia?

"You were not disturbed last night, were you?" she abruptly threw at me, at the same time seeming to read my inmost thoughts.

"Not at all, thank you," I fibbed. "I slept very sound."

"That is good. It argues well for your nerves. You are to attend a young lady who is now beneath my roof. You are to ask no questions, prying into nothing while in my service, and you are to keep your own secrets."

I bowed.

"This young lady is now slightly indisposed. You may think you recognize her, for she may bear a striking resemblance to some one whom you have seen; but, nevertheless, you are not to indicate that you regard her as being any one less than she is, a Miss Bothwell, a niece of mine."

It was patent to me that Mrs. Cash Pattison was deliberately lying. She might brazen it out before me, but I felt that the time was near at hand when I should prove all her words a tissue of falsehoods.

"Your niece?" I said.

"Yes, the only child of a deceased brother who left her in my charge. She is not insane, Miss Quigg, but she has delusions which may startle you. You are to take no notice of these more than to humor her as you see fit, but on no account are you to regard her as other than she is—Miss Stella Bothwell."

I bowed again, with rising gorge, and yearned for Mrs. Pattison to introduce me to my future charge and companion.

In a few moments she reached out and touched a silver call-bell on the table in front of her. Its tones seemed to ring through the house and a moment later the door opened.

"Miss Stella," said Mrs. Pattison to the tall, dark-faced girl who answered the summons.

The dark face vanished, and presently I heard footsteps in the hall and the door swung wide again.

In came two persons, one the dark girl and the other the person I had seen the night before emerge from the music parlor on the arm of my employer.

I had steeled myself beforehand against an exclamation, for I felt sure that I was about to stand face to face with Marcia, and the moment I looked I almost broke my resolution.

Before me stood the one Marcia Gray of Halcyon Hall. I would have testified to her identity before any court of law, but I had promised Mrs. Pattison to keep my secrets and betray in no manner what passed in her house.

"You can go, Beckwith," she said to the dark girl, and in another second there were but three of us in the parlor.

"Stella," continued Mrs. Cash, addressing Marcia, "this is your maid. Her name is Carter, I believe—Mary Carter. She will attend to your wants and I trust you will find her efficient. And now, since you may want to dress, she will go with you and become acquainted with her duties. Carter, you will go with Miss Stella to her rooms."

Never shall I forget the thrill that passed through me as I climbed the broad stair with Marcia Gray.

Her touch seemed to send an electric shock through every nerve and her glance produced a sensation I cannot describe.

As yet I had not addressed her, but I had resolved to test her identity the moment we should be alone.

She had recovered from the pallor of the past night when she came out of the music parlor with Mrs. Pattison, and seemed her old self; still, there was a strangeness about her which I had never seen at the old Hall.

She opened the door of her luxurious chamber and ushered me into it, then as she closed it and turned I sprang forward and caught her arm.

"Marcia! Marcia!" I cried. "Don't you know me? I am Lucie."

These were words I could keep back no longer. They welled to my lips in spite of my resolutions, and while I waited for response I thought I should sink to the floor in a faint.

Marcia heard like a person in a dream, passing her white hand over her fair brow and looking me strangely in the eyes.

"You are Lucie, you say, and you call me Marcia?" she said at last.

"I am Lucie. I was your maid at The Hall. Don't you remember the night of the tenth? I dressed you for the ceremony, but when they came to look for you, lo! you were gone."

A laugh parted her lips and I watched her closely.

Before she spoke again she went to the door and turned the key, then came back to me.

"I am Marcia Gray," she said, "and you are Lucie!" she cried, taking me suddenly in her arms.

"But what is this mystery? How did you escape from the altar that wild night, and in your wedding garments at that? Why are you in Mrs. Pattison's house, and why does she call you her niece, Stella Bothwell, and, above all things, Marcia, tell me, your friend till death, why is Don Luis Potosi under this same roof?"

At mention of the name of the dark-faced Portuguese she fell back and a wild look filled her eyes.

"I cannot—dare not—for the present tell you," she said. "But tell me one thing. Is my father alive?"

"Alive and at The Hall."

"Thank Heaven! Now"— she put her finger to her lips as footsteps were heard outside the room—"no more now. Gorgon is out there."

No need to tell me who Gorgon was. I recalled the dwarf I had seen in the corridor with the light.

CHAPTER X.

THE HAND OF CRIME.

A week passed for me under the roof of Mrs. Pattison. It was a week of watching and labor. I saw a good deal of Marcia Gray, but the mystery of her escape from The Hall and of her coming to this house was still a mystery to me.

When we were alone she would become the same Marcia, but she told me but little that would tend to throw any light upon the secrets of the past. I longed to get a chance to report to Doctor Crossley, whom I had not seen since coming to the Pattison mansion, but they gave me no opportunity.

On the ninth day of my stay in that house of secrets its tragedy took place.

I had parted from Marcia in her room and was already in my own little apartment, ready to court the slumberous god. But when I began to disrobe my drowsiness suddenly wore off and I took up a novel for a tonic.

The night was a beautiful one. The starry field was one of indescribable splendor, and a soft wind came up the river, gently shaking the vines that clung to the walls of the house.

I read and read until the faint striking of the clock below stairs told me that the witching hour of midnight had come.

At last with a yawn I laid the book away, but did not rise from my chair.

Suddenly a wild cry echoed through the house, and in an instant I was on my feet.

It had come up from below, and the terror of it seemed to drive my blood into a heap and to still the heart in my bosom.

I found myself, I don't know how, at the door, which I held open with one hand, while I looked out into the hall. Everything was still. Surely I could not have been mistaken. That cry was real and not the creature of a dream.

Eager to see if anything had happened to Marcia, I tiptoed to her door and listened.

Beyond the portal the quietude of the grave reigned, and when I tried the knob I found that the portal was locked.

But the cry—the shriek—had come up from below.

Determined to ferret out the mystery, as I thought it was my duty to do, I went downstairs.

The parlor door stood open. That was nothing unusual, for I often found it thus; indeed, it was scarcely ever shut, and I peeped into the lofty room.

A dim light prevailed, enough to show me that the parlor was not tenanted at that hour; then I withdrew and for a moment stood undecided in the hall.

Why had not that cry been repeated? Had some one cried out in sleep and then fallen back into the realms of dreamland? No, I secretly argued; that was a death cry. Murder was in the house.

I instantly thought of a thousand things while I stood in the wide hall.

Had Mrs. Pattison heard the cry? Why was she not looking for an explanation of the shriek? Where was she, anyhow?

It was but a few steps to her bedroom. I resolved to hasten in that direction in hopes of solving the mystery of the midnight cry.

It did not take me long to reach the door of the widow's chamber. It stood wide open.

Beyond the portal a glimmer of light prevailed, and I ran forward, halting at the door as if fearful of being terribly shocked should I go beyond.

But I broke every resolve I had inwardly made. I passed beyond the threshold; I leaned into the room and looked with wild, staring eyes, and I saw enough to freeze my blood with horror.

The body of Mrs. Pattison lay on the floor as if she had been dragged from her couch.

She lay on her side, half doubled up, and I remember noticing what a giantess she was.

For a moment I gazed horror struck at the sight, and then I bent over the body.

The light I turned on a little higher so that it revealed the hidden corners of the boudoir and then I saw more.

There was a pool of blood where her bosom had touched the carpet, and, still sticking in her breast, was a dagger with a black handle.

I could have guessed with what that hilt was tipped even before I stooped lower to inspect it. I knew that it bore the child-like head of Christ.

Alone with the dead, the murdered, I stood half paralyzed with terror until I thought I heard footsteps somewhere.

Then I drew back and waited, but they seemed to pass out of hearing wherever they were.

Mrs. Pattison was dead and I did not look to see if the object of the crime had been robbery or revenge, but drew still further back, gained the stair and knocked wildly at Marcia's door.

For some time I heard nothing beyond the threshold and then the knob turned and I was admitted.

Marcia was standing white-robed before me, her face as white as her night garb and her eyes staring wildly at me.

"What is it?" she cried.

"Enough. It is murder."

"Murder?"

"Downstairs. Mrs. Pattison."

We went down the broad steps together, and I will always remember the strange calmness that had come over the fair girl at my side.

She did not speak during the descent, and I led her to Mrs. Pattison's room.

"There! Look!" was all I said as I pointed at the body on the floor.

Marcia's lips parted, but no cry came from them. She advanced and bent over the great body, looking at the white face and then up at me.

"Murdered?"

"Look at the dagger still in the breast."

"But there is no dagger here."

I uttered a cry and started forward.

"It was there when I came here a few moments ago," I exclaimed.

"Then it has vanished."

A glance told me that Marcia had spoken the truth. The dagger which I had found in the breast of the dead had disappeared. Some one had taken it away.

"The murderer came back," said I. "He came and took away the weapon that did the deed."

"You say 'he' came back," said Marcia.

"Why not? Who could drag Mrs Cash from her couch but a man?"

Marcia stood speechless before me. She looked again at the victim on the carpet, and then into my face.

"Shall I go for Doctor Crossley?" I asked.

"For Doctor Crossley—for Thaddeus?" she cried. "Not for the world! Not for Doctor Crossley, for she is dead and he cannot bring pulsations back to that stilled heart."

"But it is murder."

Marcia fell back into a chair and for several moments directed her gaze at the body on the floor.

Just then a shadow seemed to fall across the threshold and we looked up. Judith, the dark-faced girl, stood before us.

She was as immovable as stone, and her glance at once sought the victim of the tragedy.

"Which one of you killed her?" fell from Judith's lips.

Marcia sprang from her chair and her quivering finger covered the girl while her face seemed to increase in deathly pallor.

"Look at your hand, Judith!" she cried. "You never killed her, I know that; but who stole the dagger after the deed? There is blood on your hand, girl."

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE HANDS OF THE POLICE.

Judith's face for a moment looked like the wrathful face of a tigress.

Her stature seemed to increase and I narrowly watched her, for she seemed about to launch herself upon Marcia. I was ready to throw myself between her and her intended victim and to hurl her back against the wall.

But instead of doing this she merely laughed coldly and vindictively and walked away.

"Where is Gorgon?" I asked.

"Gorgon the terrible? I do not know. She was in her room a short time ago, for I heard her, but——"

"Who is Gorgon?" for the looks of that misshapen creature had strangely interested me.

"The dead woman knows," and Marcia pointed at the sight on the floor. "I have felt Gorgon's hands on my throat——"

"You?" I cried indignantly.

Marcia seemed to shudder.

"The alarm must be raised," she went on. "Some one must know of this. You will tell the world. I must not be seen."

I did not more than half understand this, but as Marcia left the room I gathered myself together and shut the door.

The disappearance of the dagger puzzled me. I had surely seen it sticking in the bosom of the dead, and Marcia had asked Judith what she knew about it, which, to my mind, indicated a suspicion.

Intent on informing the proper authorities of the tragedy, I hastened from the house. At the nearest corner I nearly collided with a man who uttered a cry at sight of me, so that I drew back and looked into the face of Doctor Crossley.

I did not ask myself what he was doing in that vicinity at that hour, for I did not have time. I seized his arm and saying "Murder," pointed toward the house.

"Murder?" he ejaculated. "Where?"

"At Mrs. Pattison's."

"Who has been killed?"

"The mistress herself."

He gave vent to a strange, startling cry and hastened after me.

We entered the house together, and I pointed toward the room of death while I hurried to my own apartment.

Then I thought it was not right to leave Doctor Crossley alone with the dead, so I came back and stopped at the open door. The doctor was bending over the victim of the black-handled dagger, closely examining the wound, and I did not interrupt him.

Totally unaware of my presence, for he had not heard my footsteps, he was giving the wound a scientific examination and I did not disturb him.

At last he rose and looked around the room.

"It is true, Miss," he said, suddenly discovering me. "She is dead, killed by a dagger and by one thrust. The hand that did this was a hand of cunning. It knew where to strike and it has struck before."

"I don't doubt that."

"Dead!" Doctor Crossley passed his hand meditatively over his face and reflected a moment. "I say, Miss Quigg, tell me what you know about this crime before they question you."

"The police?"

"That is it—the police."

I told him all, carefully omitting the fact that Marcia also was aware of the deed and that she had been down and looked at the victim.

Not once did I mention that I had rediscovered the missing heiress of Halcyon Hall. He listened intently and several times interrupted me to ask an important question.

"That will do, Miss Quigg," he said at the conclusion of my story. "I thank you very much. I can do nothing here."

"But I? Is not my term of service here already ended?" I asked.

"By right it terminates with this death." he answered. "But would you mind staying a while longer? You may be needed here."

"You mean you want me to remain for your sake, do you not?"

"That is it—for my sake."

"Then for your sake I stay," said I, but

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deep in my heart I added: "For Marcia's sake as well."

Doctor Crossley issued from the room and passed to the front door.

"Will you acquaint the authorities of this crime?" I asked.

He nodded, looked strangely at me and was gone.

I went back and shut the door leading to the scene of the tragedy, then mounted the steps to my little room. A shudder of horror chilled my blood; I thought of a thousand things, but amid them all there came before me the vision of Don Luis Potosi as I had seen him last.

Half an hour later the house was under charge of the police authorities. They plied me with questions, they ferreted out Judith and the sleeping servants in the distant ell, but overlooked Marcia. It was a night which shall never pass from my memory.

I thought of the accounts in the newspapers, of the excitement the murder of this queen of society would bring about—of my own name in the columns of the dailies—of everything, almost.

But I resolutely clung to my promise to Doctor Crossley, to remain in the house until the mystery of Marcia was solved.

The newspapers dwelt on the crime, saying that the very mystery connected with it placed it in the catalogue of the most mysterious crimes of the world. Detectives were sent to the house and were taken over it, everywhere except into the rooms of Marcia.

Judith, the tall maid, seemed my friend for a time. She came to me and laid her hand on my wrist. It was as cold as the skin of a serpent.

"Not a word about the presence of the young lady in this house," she said in commanding tones, while there was a threat in her eyes.

I bowed, for I understood.

They took up "the threads of crime," as the detectives say, and went to work upon the mystery.

They buried Mrs. Pattison as they would have buried a queen, and I watched the proud cortege as it moved from the house, carrying to the tomb a mystery which I felt would never be solved.

When the last carriage had turned the nearest corner I felt a hand on my arm, and, looking over my shoulder, I gazed into the eyes of Marcia.

"What did he say?" were her first words.

"The minister?"

"No, Thaddeus—Doctor Crossley."

"Then you know he has been here?"

"Yes."

"How does he look?"

"Not like he looked the night of the tenth."

"It has affected him?"

"Yes."

"Well, tell me—you did not mention my name—to him?"

"I did not."

"I thank you, Lucie."

She was silent for a moment, and then once more her hand sought my arm.

"You told him about the missing dagger—the one you saw in the bosom of madam?"

"I mentioned it to him."

"The strange black-handled one?"

"The one with the head of Christ on it."

"Yes, yes. That dagger has gone back to its owner, and when they find it they will have found the person who killed madam."

"They will find it; they shall!" I cried, "and I will help them all I can!"

CHAPTER XII.

A CATSPAW AGAIN.

A singular, almost ghostly, calmness seemed to brood over the mansion on M—— street after the death of its mistress.

Fortunately, we were not much disturbed by visits from the police, therefore the presence of Marcia was not discovered, and as all of us had entered into a compact to shield the fair girl from annoyance we had hopes of being successful.

Doctor Crossley sent me a note the second day after the burial and in response I hastened to his abode.

He occupied a little house on a quiet street with a small office attached, and I feared on my way thither that I was to be questioned about my charge.

The shades of night had fallen ere I reached the house, but I found Thaddeus Crossley awaiting me. He sat in a large chair in an expectant mood and the moment I looked into his face I halted and waited for him to speak.

"You are punctual, Miss Quigg," said he, eyeing me closely for a moment. "I like promptness. I have sent for you for a singular purpose."

As he finished he wheeled his chair so as to look me fairly in the face, while he paused as if to choose his next words.

"I have here," and he opened his desk and took out two little pieces of glass which he shoved toward me, "I have here two drops of blood, or, to be more particular, two drops of human blood."

I looked at the little dried spots on the surface of the glass, and then at the doctor.

"This," and he touched one of the specimens, "this is the blood of Mrs. Pattison."

I felt the old shudders coming back.

"And this other is the blood of the same unfortunate lady, but they were not found in the same place nor at the same time."

"Then you have a clew?"

"Come, not quite so fast," smiled Doctor Crossley. "I did not say I had found a clew. That is what the whole police force of New Orleans is looking for just now. Specimen, or exhibit, number one," and he again designated the sample, "I brought away with me that night; this one, number two let us say, to distinguish them, I found last night.

I could not keep back a cry.

"Yes, last night, Miss Quigg. I have submitted both to a chemical analysis; they belonged once to the living, breathing body of Mrs. Cash Pattison."

"But——"

"I anticipate what you would say," he broke in. "You cannot imagine how I came across this specimen so late last night."

"That's it exactly."

"I am no detective, and I have no inclinations in that direction," he went on. "I know where I found the last specimen. Now, Miss Quigg, having said this much and shown you these grewsome objects, I want you to undertake a little mission for me."

I did not speak, for I recalled the mission I had undertaken for him to Halcyon Hall, and I wondered if he intended me to go back into the hands of Chester Parsons, the nurse and demon who had control there. He seemed to read my thoughts to a dot.

"No, you are not to be asked to go back to The Hall," he said with a smile. "I shall not again impose such a duty upon you. But I want you to call on a man who is known sometimes as Antonio Ferral."

I did not speak.

"This Antonio Ferral," he continued, "is one of the most noted blacklegs of the Crescent City."

"I do not know him."

"Of course not. Your life, Miss, has not taken you across his path as Ferral. He is a gambler who wins without ceasing and his hand seems to be against every man."

"Why should I meet him?"

"For my sake and for hers," he said, speaking the last word with a slight emphasis as he looked straight at me.

"Do you mean Marcia?"

He started as if shot.

"Ask me no questions, Miss Quigg. You must undertake this mission for me and for her. Let that be all for me to say. This Antonio Ferral is a Portuguese——"

I interrupted him with a little fearsome cry.

"What is it?"

"A Portuguese? So was Don Luis Potosi."

Hard lines seemed to gather about Doctor Crossley's mouth; his eyes got a determined, revengeful flash which died away almost as quickly as it came into being.

"Oh, yes, I recall the sleek rascal," he smiled. "He was the disappointed bridegroom the night of the tenth."

"Does he know this Antonio Ferral?"

"Yes; all foreigners are acquainted with one another. I should say that Don Luis is acquainted with Antonio."

I said no more, but waited for him to proceed.

"Miss Quigg, if I could send any other person upon this mission I would gladly do it, but you are the person to meet Ferral; you love her; you loved her when she was the light of Halcyon Hall——"

"And I still love her, Doctor Crossley."

"Of course."

"Do you know——"

"Come; don't question me, please, Miss," he said, breaking in upon my words which would have ended by asking him if he knew where Marcia was at that hour.

I was thus checked upon the threshold of a query that might have drawn a confession from his carefully guarded heart.

"Antonio Ferral has quarters in the French end," he suddenly continued. "Just why he does not herd with his kind is past my comprehension, but I suppose he has a purpose for staying where he does. He is sometimes shadowed by a woman in black——"

"Not the one I saw thrown over the cliffs into the river the night before the interrupted wedding?" I exclaimed.

"You never told me about that, Miss."

"No, I have kept that secret."

"Well, keep it a while longer," was the reply. "But if you saw a woman hurled over the cliffs at Halcyon Hall, the one who shadows Antonio Ferral cannot be she. It is far down to the river from those cliffs."

"Yes, yes; and a plunge of that kind is death."

"Well, you will seek a meeting with this Antonio Ferral. Here is his city address," and a bit of paper was pushed toward me. "You may find him at the Red Casino, too, but they might not let you in there all the time."

I picked up the paper mechanically and read the words thereon.

The address given was not in a very desirable part of the city, and a little shudder crept along my nerves. But I did not drop the paper nor push it back to him, for had he not said that my mission was in the interest of her, meaning Marcia, to whom I had already devoted my life?

"You will go?" said he, looking me over intently for a full minute.

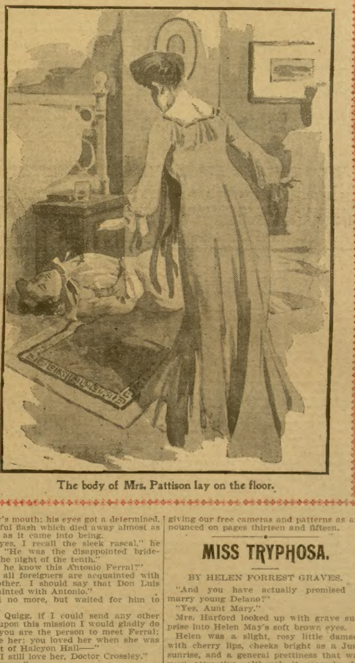
"I will go."

"That is good. Much depends on you, Miss Quigg. You have nerves and discretion. You are to enter Antonio Ferral's room, but not when he is at home! you are to meet him not as Lucie Quigg but as another with whom he will fall in love for a time. He has loved many women; he may have killed several, for the tiger is capable of that. You will search his room and bring me anything that you may think I may want to see—blood-stained garments or a little dagger tipped with the head of the Nazarene."

I could not suppress a cry as I started to my feet.

"I see!" I cried. "Antonio Ferral is Don Luis Potosi."

Further chapters of this extraordinary story will appear in next week's issue of the Ledger. With each subscription we are still giving our free cameras and patterns as announced on pages thirteen and fifteen.



The body of Mrs. Pattison lay on the floor.

MISS TRYPHOSA.

BY HELEN FORREST GRAVES.

"And you have actually promised to marry young Delano?"

"Yes, Aunt Mary."

Mrs. Harford looked up with grave surprise into Helen May's soft brown eyes.

Helen was a slight, rosy little damsel, with cherry lips, cheeks bright as a June sunrise, and a general prettiness that was very attractive, although it scarcely deserved the name of beauty.

"But, Helen, he is poor and obscure, while you——"

"While I am only little Helen May, quite ready to be contented with the love of a true and manly heart. Indeed, Aunt Mary, Robert Delano deserves a better wife than I."

"The world judges these things differently, Helen," said Mrs. Harford, passing her hand fondly over Helen's bright hair. "By the way, isn't he some relation of yours, on the father's side?"

"Only a distant cousin, Aunt Mary."

"If it was essential to your happiness to bear the name of Delano," said Aunt Mary, roguishly, "why didn't you take his brother, Clarence? I am sure he is much the handsomer of the two."

"I don't think so, aunty. Clarence is too conceited—too proud of his own talents. He thinks little Helen May an insignificant country girl, and wonders at Robert's folly in selecting me as a wife. Ah, I am no fortune teller, aunt, but Clarence cannot hide his convictions from me."

"Hush!" said Mrs. May, lifting up her finger. "There is a ring at the bell. I rather think, my dear, that Robert and Clarence are both coming here to spend the evening with you."

And Helen ran out of the room to smooth her brown hair, and re-arrange the ribbons at her throat before greeting her lover.

"By the way, Miss May," said Clarence Delano, that same evening as he sat yawning by the bright anthracite fire, "you come from Pennsylvania, don't you? Colchester, in Pennsylvania?"

"I believe so, Mr. Delano."

"Well, now, I'll tell you what," said Clarence, running his fingers through his scented curls, "that's a regular coincidence. Did you ever meet our rich cousin, Miss Tryphosa—the old miseress, if there's such a word, who owns half the county?"

"Occasionally," laughed Helen.

"Well, I was telling Bob this morning when he was lamenting the need of a little ready cash to start him in the world as a man should start it, who intends to get married—don't frown at me, Bob, it's gospel truth, and you daren't contradict me——"

"Go on," said Helen, merrily.

"I was saying, why shouldn't we dip our hands into the old cat's hoards? Let's make use of our relationship—we are fortieth cousins, I've heard—Bob and I will write dutiful, cousinly letters, and borrow, say, ten thousand dollars each!"

"Always supposing that Miss Tryphosa will lend it."

"Yes, of course, always supposing that she will lend it, for I've an idea that she's a stingy old harridan. Once borrowed, why, nobody's ruined if we never repay it!"

Robert Delano's square, handsome brow had been contracting as his brother spoke, and at this juncture he interrupted him.

"Clarence, you are talking in a manner that I for one cannot countenance. If I should apply to Miss Tryphosa for money, I should regard it as a sacred duty to repay the loan as early as possible—the kindness I never could repay."

Clarence arched his eyebrows with lazy scorn.

"Bob always was up in the clouds," was his muttered comment. "What do you say, Miss Helen? Would the rich old maid lend the funds if we wrote nice, cousinly letters?"

"I should think it very possible that she might."

"It's worth trying, at all events."

And the next time Mr. Clarence Delano met Miss May, she archly asked him:

"Well, have you writen to your rich cousin?"

"Oh, yes, Miss May—and she is to give me audience at Mrs. Harford's next week. I congratulate you on the prospect of a long infliction of country cousindom."

Helen bowed with a mock dignity that Clarence scarcely knew how to interpret.

"By Jove! she is pretty," thought the young man. "Upon my word, I'm rather disposed to worry Bob. If it wasn't that a rich wife was essential to my plans in life, I'd go in for the little May blossom myself."

"Ten o'clock on the eighteenth day of June—that's the hour that was indicated by the rich old spinster. Come, Bob, if you're so everlastingly long adjusting your white tie, she'll disinherit us," laughed Clarence. "It's half-past nine now."

"I am ready," said Robert, quietly, and the brothers set out toward Mrs. Harford's residence.

"Miss Tryphosa May is upstairs," said Mrs. Harford, meeting them at the door with a smile.

"And Helen?" questioned Robert.

"Helen is with her," said Mrs. Harford.

The morning sunshine poured bright and warm into the cheerful sitting-room, as the two young men entered, but no wrinkled old maid or withered "fairy godmother" met their anxious eyes. Helen was standing by the rose bushes in the window, but she was quite alone.

"Where is Miss Tryphosa?" questioned Clarence when the usual greetings had been exchanged, and even Robert glanced inquiringly around.

"Here."

"But where?"

"I tell you here," laughed Helen, touching her own white forehead. "Now, for the first time, you know that I am Helen Tryphosa May, and that I have the good or ill-fortune—I scarce know how to call it—to be very rich. My lawyer will be in attendance presently to make out all necessary papers for the loan you wish to negotiate."

"But, look here," stammered the confused Clarence, "I thought Miss Tryphosa was an old maid—a regular harridan—a——"

"You perceive your mistake," said Helen, courtesying very low.

The crimson blood rushed to Clarence's forehead as he remembered his speech about "nobody being ruined if the money never was repaid."

"Miss May," he faltered, "I have made an egregious blunder—I have been mistaken."

"No apologies, I beg," said the pretty heiress, archly. "Helen May won't remember all the satirical epithets you applied to Miss Tryphosa. Robert," she added, turning appealingly to her lover, "you don't blame me for acting a double part for once. You always declared that you never would be married to a rich wife; I have vowed that I never would be married for the sake of my wealth. You have wooed and won Helen May, and if you are obliged, after all, to marry Miss Tryphosa, I don't see that you can very well help yourself."

And Robert, folding the light figure to his heart, declared that he would not help himself if he could.

As for Mr. Clarence, he stared. Bob had found a diamond of the purest water in the sparkling sands of life's river—and Clarence was left but the pebbles only.

One Way to Make Himself Heard.

"Your husband in Councils? We never hear of him. His name never gets in the newspapers."

"Yes, it does. Read yesterday's account where it says: 'A loud snore was heard on the left.' That's him."

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Russia is convinced that the peril is a very bright yellow.

No girl is quite as pretty as she thinks a man thinks she looks.

Many a lame man who doesn't limp is crippled only under his hat.

All married women are good listeners—when their husbands talk in their sleep.

A poor girl's idea of a mercenary wretch is a young man who marries a rich widow.

The lay of the average poet would be more valuable if he could exchange it for the lay of a hen.

If you see it in an unconfirmed humor that the Japanese won a great victory it is probably so.

If a leap-year girl doesn't want to take any chances she should propose to a widower who dyes his hair.

Some people seem to think the Almighty is making a mistake in not leaving the management entirely to them.

It is simply wonderful how clearly the average military expert in London can foresee a thing after it has happened.

Speaking of dreamers, are not those persons who think Grover Cleveland can be renominated past masters in that art?

Pickpockets are being locked up at St. Louis. Holders of concessions along the Pike do not want to have any one interfere with their game.

Young Mr. Rockefeller doubtless can get other millionaires to testify to the fact that his father acquired his money in an unobjectionable manner.

Any man who has to get up and get his own breakfast while his wife lies in bed is likely to feel like turning the "God Bless Our Home" motto to the wall.

General Kouropatkin, who says that the Russian soldiers will astonish the world, may not know to what extent the Japanese are proof against astonishment.

If it sends most of its soldiers to the East, Russia is wondering who will prevent the student bodies from shooting up the town and making faces at the Government?

It would appear that influential people who obey the laws must be doing so just because they like to and not through any fear of getting into trouble if they should break over.

The Omar Passion Ruby;

OR,

The Tragic Secret of a Young Wife's Heart.

BY CONSTANCE BEATRICE WILLARD.

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CHAPTER XVI.

"The rats begin to leave the sinking ship."

The rain dashed madly against the windows, and the wind howled about the corners of houses. Inside a snug suite of apartments sat two men, both smoking. One of them was wonderfully handsome; the other was ugly, and yet as they sat there, both wore the same keen, cruel expression, for both preyed upon the needs and fears of others.

The handsome man had a pile of letters before him, and was smiling in an ugly manner, the corners of his lips curling up like those of an angry dog.

"Every man has a secret," he said scornfully.

"Not many," broke in his companion puffing vigorously until but little could be seen of him.

"How's that?"

"Nothing's a secret when two know it."

"Yes?"

"Well, if you don't know most men's secrets I miss my guess," chuckled the ugly man, sinking down lower in his comfortable chair.

The other man glanced at several envelopes, and finally opened one, glowered at it, then without a word opened another, which also appeared to annoy him. For a few minutes he walked back and forth, and then, returning, opened the remainder of the letters. His anger was intense.

"Your blooming smartness has ruined us," he cried to his companion.

"Look at this," and he pointed at the table, where were six torn envelopes and six blank sheets of paper.

"I didn't make any mistakes, because I had those circulars in another pocket, and never let go these others," he protested earnestly.

Six torn envelopes lay upon the table, together with six blank sheets of paper. Outside the rain and wind mourned and splashed and made everything intensely disagreeable, but in the moments that followed the ugly man longed for its protection rather than that offered by the snug room.

CHAPTER XVII.

"The mystery begins to raise her veil."

"Charlie."

"Yes, sir."

"Close that door. Here, sit close and tell me once more what that donkey from Barley, Kingston & Bros. said."

"Well, sifting out the chaff, as it were, it's just this," responded young Charlie Rolston, trying to speak rapidly and exactly to the point.

"Barley, Kingston & Bros., backed by that swell Charlemayne, are holding a big consignment of wheat in reserve, with which they intend flooding the market at forty. They will break the corner and force wheat back to ten if possible."

The senior member of Hilgarth, Wagner & Co. looked earnestly at his blotting pad for a few moments, then asked abruptly:

"What was the closing figure?"

"Thirty-eight and three-quarters."

"Then the unloading will begin today?"

"That's the plan. Just as soon as she hits forty."

"Charlie."

"Yes, sir."

"Timbleton is leaving next week, and I think his place about fits you."

A quick intaking of the breath was the only interruption, and Mr. Hilgarth looked pleased.

"Listen to me. I am going to test you. While you are fairly young for such work, I believe you are pretty keen. If you pull this through for me as I want it, I'll see that things go straight for you. Still, my lad," and the man's fingers closed about the strong young wrist and felt the steady heart beats, "how much are you risking on this?"

A quick flush mounted to the young fellow's hair, but he answered bravely:

"Nothing."

"That's straight?"

"Straight as a string. I have seen too much for me to take any risks. It's big fun and excitement managing for the firm, but I need my nerve all with me to do it, and if I was watching the market for myself, some deals might go to the wall."

The elder man said nothing, but his expression of approval showed the candidate for the higher position that his course met the approval of the man who was already making the bear look about. For the next ten minutes Hilgarth gave instructions, concluding with the words:

"Buy the d——d stuff as fast as it is dumped on the market, but have the sales so distributed that they cannot be connected. There' that's enough."

"How high shall I put it?"

"As high as it will go, and don't let it drop for the fraction of a second."

And as Rolston left the office with his bright, alert way, Hilgarth thought to himself:

"There, Jacob, old man, is a chap you can make a good man out of, for he has the right principles. If you can't have what you want, help others to get their toys, and don't bite the dust. Whatever you do, Jacob, my boy, don't bite the dust," and with something very like a sigh the great grain manipulator turned to his overloaded desk, when a card was handed him.

"Nice time to disturb me," he muttered, but gave instructions to have his visitor shown into his room, and when he entered, rose and extended a friendly hand to the father of Ethel Winters.

"Good-morning. What do you know?" he asked pleasantly, motioning the caller to a seat.

Mr. Winters fixed the broker with a stony stare and said angrily:

"I thought you were my friend."

"Am."

"Why don't you marry Ethel?"

"Because I don't want to," was the quick answer.

"'Because she don't want to,' you had better say," snapped the father.

"No, sir, because I would not marry her for anything under the sun. Do you suppose I want to thrust myself upon a woman who loves another man? That is enough. I will be her friend, adopted brother, a better father to her than you have ever been, but her husband—never in all this world. Understand?" and Jacob Hilgarth fairly glared.

"But—but——" Mr. Winters began, but he was interrupted.

"Shut right up here and now. I have some big things on board for today. I'll tell you what I will do, and then I want you and your hard-hearted wife to try and realize that there is something else in the world besides money getting and money having. First, I want you to write your formal sanction to the marriage of Ethel with Lieutenant Fulton."

"I simply will not do it."

"All right, then, my proposal will not be made," was the stern reply.

With a hand that trembled the father wrote out with considerable legal phraseology a formal consent, as requested, and Hilgarth called in a notary to affix his signature. Then he resumed sternly:

"I have a supreme contempt for you, Winters. You and that wife of yours would have sold your own flesh and blood to me, not caring what manner of man I might be, just willing to let her come to me because I have a little money. Still, you are her father, and I want her to have a little peace of mind, therefore, although I will not allow you to do any speculating, I am going to buy you fifty thousand bushels at the opening," and ringing the bell he gave certain instructions to a grave-faced young man, who listened and then left the room.

"That will be bought at $1.38¾. I will sell in time for you to realize something handsome, for you may have the fifty thousand, too. This is the price I pay for your consent. Go home, now, you old blathering idiot, and try to make that gentle child realize that she is not quite alone in the world, but if you mention a word of this transaction, I'll forget to deliver the goods. Get out of here, don't you hear the ticker?" and almost throwing the old man out, Jacob Hilgarth settled down to what was going to be one of the hardest days in his history, forgetting to a certain extent the heavy pain gnawing at his heart, which made everything seem dull and spiritless, for there was no brown-haired girl to dream over now.

While he was thus entering the arena, this same brown-haired girl was dashing along Michigan avenue beside Mrs. Coverdale, who had called for her, and the two looked as fresh as the morning, which gave winsome promises of spring, inducing people to believe that winter was really over, although each year ought to teach the deceptive quality of February thaws.

Ethel was joyously happy, for she knew that Hilgarth would keep his promise and that her future would be assured. Then, too, a little bunch of the violets she always wore now was tucked at her chin, among the brown martin fur, the lighter shades of which just matched the beautiful hair, and the darker ones her trim, tailor-made suit. She was not beautiful save in the eyes of the two men who loved her, but she was pretty, sweet and infinitely charming, a girl who would develop into a noble woman.

Beside her, with a firm hand upon the lever, sat probably one of the most beautiful women in this country, unless Miss Geryon be excepted, and then she was so entirely different a type, but how worn the lovely face appeared! All of the wild rose coloring was gone, Ethel suddenly noticed just after Mr. Charlemayne passed them on horseback, charming and debonair as usual. The lithe young figure was almost smothered in furs, strange jet black fur, with a long, plumy pile that was absolutely priceless, yet on this charming morning with the touch of spring in the air, Hildegarde Coverdale shivered.

"Cold, darling?" Ethel asked joyously. Oh, how delightful it was to be alive—to know that not many miles away there was some one to whom she was the dearest creature on the face of the earth! Then came a little twinge of pain, for she knew that nearer than the dear lover was another to whom her welfare was a sacred thing.

"Yes, I am cold. There is a chill in the wind, after all," Mrs. Coverdale returned, and then started slightly as an accomplished horsewoman drew rein beside them and kept pace with the automobile which Mrs. Coverdale was guiding so skilfully.

Mounted upon her fiery chestnut, Miss Lou-May Piggert looked more dashing than usual, and her queenly luxuriance of feminine attraction seemed to overshadow the others. Yet, to a gentleman coming in the opposite direction in his automobile, she looked out of place in the beauty of the morning. Her hair and inky eyes were a blot which he felt must be removed, although perhaps not just there and then. So, with a smile and a bow, Harold Nickelson passed the trio, and wondered what was in the hearts of the three. If it had lain within his power to uncover those hearts and read their secrets, in one he would have found only the one glorious one, illuminated by the roseate hue of love. In another he would have seen crushing sorrow and deepest remorse which was eating away a fair young life as a worm at the heart of a bud; and in the other! A devil's carnival of blasted hopes, unfulfilled ideals, maddened desires, and a spirit broken and abased by the first pure love a wicked woman had ever known.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Ah, what a sign it is of evil life
When death's approach is seen so terrible!"

Courteous as ever, Norman Charlemayne bent over the tape from the ticker in the office of Barley, Kingston & Bros., and appeared very much elated at what he read. Suddenly his brows contracted, and he glanced at the clock.

"Eleven," he muttered, then glanced at the tape, and appeared to scarcely believe his eyes.

"Barley," he called briskly.

"All right," came from a desk in the corner where the senior member of this great bear firm was also bending over a ticker.

"Sell some of the reserve."

"Too early," Barley returned.

"I say sell. It is forty, and I said I would begin to unload at that notch."

Mr. Barley caught up the receiver and sent some instructions to his men in the pit. A moment later a great roar penetrated the office, and both men studied the tape. Once more a terrible roar, and then all pandemonium seemed broken loose. The door swung open, and a man almost fell into the room, as though thrown there by the force of the roars from the pit. His coat was torn, his collar gone, and he was breathless.

Without a quiver of an eyelash Charlemayne looked up; Barley cried shrilly:

"What happened?"

Breathlessly the man gasped:

"First lot of fifty thousand sold the minute offered."

"By whom?"

"Some new firm; don't know the buyer."

The color began to rise in the handsome face of the society idol, but he said steadily:

"Keep on unloading," and instructions were sent down into the room in which are made and unmade so many fortunes, to place more of the resrve wheat on sale.

In the ladies' balcony Mrs. Coverdale and Miss Geryon, who had been escorted there by Mr. Nickelson, sat there and watched the unaccustomed scene. That gentleman had ridden hard to his stables, taken out his automobile and raced back to Michigan avenue and invited the three ladies whom he had left speeding gently along its paved road, to go into the Board of Trade. As he had expected, Miss Piggert had refused upon the plea that she had already paid a visit to the balcony, but the others accepted, stipulating that they pick up Miss Geryon. He offered to do this himself and meet them at the entrance of the great Board of Trade building, being nothing averse to a quiet tete-a-tete with his promised bride. When he and Miss Geryon met Mrs. Coverdale, however, the latter was alone, for she explained that Miss Winters had been carried off by Lieutenant Fulton, who had obtained a month's furlough, pending the acceptance of his resignation.

Soon after he had placed his charges, Mr. Nickelson excused himself to go to the office of Hilgarth, Wagner & Co., and the ladies began to talk about various matters, after the first curiosity had subsided.

Acting upon some impulse, Miss Geryon told her companion of the attempted blackmail, and was surprised how interested the young matron became.

"And you say you are not afraid?" Mrs. Coverdale asked, her sweet mouth quivering.

"Afraid of what? That people know I was once married to a wicked man? No; why should I be? And even if I were, if he held my very life's happiness in his hands, I would not accede to any demands of a blackmailer."

"But suppose he held the happiness of some one else?"

"I would refuse just the same," the actress answered decidedly, "for the evil would come out sooner or later. There is no such thing as buying silence."

Mrs. Coverdale looked down at the seething mass of humanity struggling for wealth, but she saw nothing of what was going on before her. In imagination she was thousands of miles away in a beautiful little Italian village. She saw a handsome, wicked face grinning at a white-haired, broken man. Then, amid all the din of the great wheat battle, she seemed to hear a broken, quavering voice say:

"Daughter, at any cost, save my honor."

As Harold Nickelson entered the private office of his friend, Hilgarth was talking over the telephone What Hilgarth heard made his face flush with pleasure.

"Is this Mr. Hilgarth?" he heard in the courteous, well-bred tones of Mr. Coverdale.

"Yes, thank you," the speaker continued. "have you plenty for the fight? If not, let me know. I sent fifteen millions, but I can easily send thirty more if you require. No, indeed, I want no thanks. Although I never speculate myself, I want you to carry out your ideas. Ah, yes, you are very kind to speak so, but I assure you I am happy to be in a condition to accommodate you. Good luck. Yes, good-by."

As he returned the pleasant good-by, Jacob Hilgarth turned to Nickelson and remarked gravely:

"I wish, Harold, we could solve this mystery."

"What mystery?" Nickelson asked in a low tone.

"The one surrounding the connection between Mrs. Coverdale and that Charlemayne."

Nickelson bent his brows, but said nothing, and the other continued;

"Coverdale fairly idolizes her."

"And I would swear she does him," was the quick reply.

"Something in the past, I presume, but he is not the kind of a fellow to blackmail."

Nickelson bent and whispered a few sharp words in Hilgarth's ear. The latter uttered an oath and sprang to his feet. Suddenly he shook his shoulders and said impatiently:

"Nick, old boy, let these things go just now. I'm having the fight of my life just now. Oh, yes, I'll win out, for do you know what Coverdale is doing? Backing me to any amount. I can buy every bushel of wheat in the market of the world today, and have plenty of money left over. No, I am not going to use it to run the price up higher than I can help, but to break that d——d bear coterie, of which I have secret information Charlemayne is the head. Let other things go until after the Board closes, for I am going to force issues today; come in here, then, and I'll go into these matters and sift things to the very bottom," and with that he bent over his tape and uttered a short, sharp cry of dismay. Wheat had fallen a point. A second later it had risen two, and then continued to mount steadily.

In the pit the tumult increased. Thousands of bushels wheat were offered, and just as quickly snapped up, while in the gallery were many interested spectators. However, our two friends understood but vaguely, and were glad when Mr. Nickelson, with a preoccupied manner, came to deliver them. This preoccupation continued when, after placing Mrs. Coverdale in her machine, he took his place by the side of the charming actress; but she, being a wise as well as a beautiful woman, held her peace.

This was a day never to be forgotten. Fortunes melted away with every sound of the ticker. The great wheat reserve upon which the bear coterie had staked so much was gone, and the bears were selling dangerously short. Higher and higher went the price of wheat. Forty-eight the tape spelled forth.

Charlemayne turned upon his brokers with an ashen face.

"D——n you," he said in that low, tense tone which means so much, "you have grossly mismanaged this."

"Damn you, yourself," retorted Barley. "Great God, man, do you think we can buck against the national reserve? Why, money has been pouring into this place like air, and there's nothing hot about it except the pace."

"If you had any sense or taste, either," snarled Kingston Sr., a man who seldom said anything, "you'd stop that joking and watch the ticker."

Both Barley and Charlemayne grabbed at the tape and read "forty-nine."

"God, man, do you know that means?" Barley cried. "We're over a million short now. Some coterie has copped this surplus of ours, and we can't meet our shorts except we buy from them. To do this we've got to have money, and that pretty d——d quick, too."

"It's forty-nine and a quarter," he said with a gasp.

Barley caught up his receiver and gave some quick instructions. "I'll make one more grandstand play," he cried.

"What have you done?" both the other men cried, as there was a fresh howl from the pit.

"Put one hundred thousand bushels more on the market."

"But our shorts already!" gasped Charlemayne.

"If we could just turn the market—once get it to dropping. No use; good God! all gone—all—all!" and as he spoke, Barley let his head fall upon his arms, while the others read "fifty" and then heard, amid the most fearful uproar, the clang of the bell which sounded the knell of their hopes and ended the great bear coterie.

One mass of bruises, with scarcely enough clothing on him for decency, his face scratched and bleeding, Charlie Rolston staggered into the office of his chief a moment later and said in a voice scarcely above a whisper, so hoarse was he:

"Well, we did do it, didn't we?" then dropped helpless into a chair.

Mrs. Coverdale was lying down, preparing herself for a musicale she was giving that night, when a card was brought in to her, and for a moment her face went ashen, then, drawing herself together, she gave orders that he be sent into her sitting-room, which we have seen before. She looked ill and broken, but very stern, as she sat in a great red leather chair, wrapped in a lounging gown of ermine, lined with shell-pink satin, and her face did not relax any of its lines as Mr. Charlemayne was shown into her presence.

"What do you want?" she asked severely.

"Money," he said harshly.

Without raising her voice or moving her head, Mrs. Coverdale remarked:

"I told you when I gave you the last that I had no more for you."

"Oh, cut that d——d nonsense out. I will have money, and right now. I have you in my power, and I mean to hold you. Get me some money."

"I have none."

"Then let me have some of your jewels. Be quick, now, and don't keep me waiting," he snarled.

Surely, the bond must be strong to induce a man to use such language.

Mrs. Coverdale, the petted darling of a good, honorable man; a lady whose standing in the community was until within a few days unquestioned, raised her eyes and said quietly:

"I will never again give you a single penny, nor will I help you in any way. Do whatever you desire, but blackmail me any longer you shall not."

"My God! then you are willing that your husband should know——"

"The truth. Yes, terrible as it is, I would, rather than be hunted out of life as I have been these past couple of weeks. Go, now, or I will call the servant, and I do not want to do that."

Charlemayne looked at the proud young face and realized that he had gone too far.

"Where are my rights?" he said softly.

"You forfeited them long ago. Are you going?" extending a slender hand, now almost transparent, toward the electric bell.

"Hilda, don't send me away without a cent. I am ruined, I am mad!" he cried, clutching at her robe.

With an expression of contempt on her face, strengthened by her conversation with Miss Geryon, and her own convictions, she touched the bell.

"The door, Wilson," she said quietly, and Charlemayne could not help but admire the self-poise of this young girl, who, after what he realized was a harrowing interview, in the face of possible disgrace could speak so evenly and graciously. The man stood for an instant looking at the sweet, beautiful face he was never to see again in this world, then, hat in hand, bowed himself gracefully from the room, and upon leaving the house, jumped into a cab, giving orders to be driven to the office of William Coverdale.

Life is long, and many years are often required to work a good deed, and yet it took Norman Charlemayne just fifteen minutes to bring absolute desolation into the heart of an honorable gentleman, and to get himself kicked down a long flight of stairs. Maddened with rage, he dashed down another flight and into the street, and thus met his fate. It was one which may come to any one in this great Chicago. A manhole exploded, as they often do, just as the disgraced man, blackmailer of a helpless woman, and society leader, stepped upon it, and when Harold Nickelson and Jacob Hilgarth reached the spot a second later, it would have been difficult for them to recognize in the mangled remains what they had known to be Norman Charlemayne and whom they had seen come out of the Coverdale building but an instant before.

As kindly as though he had been a relative, the two cared for all that was mortal, and then, their duty finished in that direction, prepared themselves for the musicale at Mrs. Coverdale's, resolving to clear away the mysteries which seemed to center in this man whose life had been ended in so tragic a manner.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Sweeter than the dew from heaven is the love of a wife."

In after years it will be a difficult matter for Hildegarde Coverdale to remember how she passed the time between Charlemayne's visit and the opening of her musicale. Mr. Coverdale did not return home until time to dress for dinner, and then sent his wife a courteous message that he had already dined and asked her to excuse him. She never will remember whether she ate anything or not, but in the hands of Nellie she was dressed in her usual tasteful manner, and appeared to welcome those she had bidden, like some radiant creature from heavenly realms. Over a severely cut white velvet she wore a fine chain feston of gold, set with the many sapphires Mr. Coverdale had spoken of the night he had given her the million dollar check. The jewels were all placed upon the garment and in a gold net for the dusky hair, and the display was something marvelous. Yet she scarcely appeared aware of her finery, or surroundings, and there was something very appealing in her dark eyes which Mr. Coverdale did not dare meet for fear he might break down utterly. How he longed to take the slim figure in his arms and bid the weary heart rest upon his bosom.

Miss Geryon came early, having put an understudy in her place, and looked queenly in black velvet without trimmings or jewels, her only adornment being her wonderful golden hair and sweet, fair face. Ethel Winters, with that charming womanly dignity upon her, bloomed out in her favorite pink, and the roses she carried were the Lieutenant's, who was no longer a poor man, thanks to the judicious maniuplations of Mr. Hilgarth.

Several numbers were rendered by celebrated artists, when there was a little commotion, and every one looked amazed as a magnificent-looking woman swept into the room. A description of her costume cannot do justice to its magnificence, nor indicate how the gorgeous colors from the richness of fabric so beautifully blended. Clothed from her gleaming shoulders to the point of a tiny satin slipper in vivid scarlet brocade of some rare old pattern, Lou-May Piggert wore upon her bosom the great ruby which Mr. Nickelson recognized as the Omar Passion Stone, and from her shoulders, fastened by great ruby clasps, swept a court train of cloth of gold studded with diamonds, the same fabric she had worn draped about her upon the occasion of the great ball of Mrs. Coverdale. She advanced to her hostess, but before she could touch that lady's little hand, a larger one was laid on her arm, and Harold Nickelson said in a very low tone:

"Go on into the library," and without a word she obeyed.

Within five minutes Mr. Nickelson and Jacob Hilgarth had gathered the host and hostess, Miss Geryon, Lieutenant Fulton, Ethel Winters, and the woman who had been known among them as a Southern heiress. Outside the closed doors of the great library, the clear voice of one or other of the singers could be heard; inside, Harold Nickelson began to speak, still keeping his hand upon the white arm of the magnificent creature in scarlet.

"Forgive our acting in so dramatic a manner, but it is necessary to clear up some unpleasant mysteries."

As he spoke, Mrs. Coverdale drooped her eyes, and Mr. Coverdale started violently.

"For some months we have had among us a man who, in some strange way, has mined himself into our confidence, and become one of ourselves."

The lovely little head with its costly net of gold and gleaming jewels drooped still lower.

"From the first I knew I had seen him somewhere, but not until yesterday did I know when and where."

Mrs. Coverdale raised her head and Miss Piggert smiled scornfully.

"Not only have we had a man posing under a false name and character, but a woman also," he continued, drawing the elegantly-dressed woman forward.

Her face was still more scornful, and her head reared like a snake ready to strike, when her eyes fell upon Lieutenant Fulton and she drooped like a wilted flower, and Nickelson and Hilgarth exchanged glances quick as lightning.

"You mean——" began Miss Geryon with infinite compassion in her voice.

"That I will ask you all to sit down and listen to me for a few moments. Take this chair," to the scarlet-gowned woman.

"Three years ago I was in Paris, and there met the Duc Du Boigne. Yes, you have heard of him, have you not, Tiger Lily?"

Like a scorching blast the name swept over the handsome woman and seemed to bow her to the very earth.

"He was on old roue, famed for his famous jewels with infamous histories, and his reigning favorite, known by the name of Tiger Lily, a woman of surpassing beauty whose golden head was to be seen upon every possible occasion, tricked out with some of the most valuable of his jewels. As I am something of a faddist on jewels myself, he showed me his wonderful collection, and offered to present me to the Tiger Lily, but I declined the latter favor. A few nights ago I saw one of his infamous jewels upon the bosom of that woman."

He then gave particulars of his investigations and continued:

"The Duc lost one night not only the Tiger Lily, but a large sum of money and his most valuable jewels. No trace of them has been found until now. Among others was this ruby, called the Omar Passion Stone, which once fitted into the head of a horrible snake god of India, and it was preserved in a golden casket with a tube of subtle poison known as the venom of the Passion Serpent—ah! you remember, do you? No, neither man died, but both have identified you."

Mr. Nickelson then told of the strange blackmailing of Miss Geryon and Miss Winters, and the events surrounding the letters, and concluded that episode with the words:

"When the detectives identified this woman as the one who had evidently endeavored to poison them, I knew who had done the blackmailing. Still, from the descriptions of the man who had the power to do this, I could not trace any resemblance to the master villain—that is, not until yesterday, when I saw him in the shadow which for the moment turned his red hair black. Once I see the nape of a man's neck I never forget it, and as the line above the collar stood out clear, with a semblance of the old color of hair above it, I knew him for Tilman Fortescue, strangely and wonderfully disguised, although I had not known him under that name. How was this disguise made?" turning toward the woman he called Tiger Lily.

"Find out," she said scornfully, but when he laid his hand heavily upon her shoulder and offered her the alternative of confessing and returning the valuables, or being returned to Paris to meet the charges made against her in that city, she began in a dull, hard tone:

"Anything is possible in these days. There is a man in Paris who works modern miracles. He changed my naturally black hair to a natural looking golden, and then turned it back to black, and made my too small nose the one you see today. How? Well, it is his secret. I believe he uses parafine. The man you knew as Norman Charlemayne went into his hands a dark-haired man with rather sparse eyebrows, a deep scar on one side of his face, and a poor complexion. He was narrow-chested and had sloping shoulders. You know how he came out. His nose was altered; his mustache removed, and in place of protruding, heavily-filled teeth, he had the white, even ones which have been the envy of all the ladies. These were pivot teeth, and cost him many a pang when they were adjusted. The man always exerted a certain amount of magnetic influence over me, and I have done just as he told me." The proud head drooped now.

"How did you enter into society here?" Nickelson asked.

"Any one with plenty of money and jewels can break into society," she returned wearily. "He had some hold or other upon several high in society in one or more cities, and managed some good letters of introduction.

"I have never quite understood all his plans, but I think he wished to make Miss Winters unhappy, engage her to a poor man, and also force her to lose a rich one. I have played my part in these things without really knowing what their outcome might be."

"Why did you do it?" Ethel Winters cried, looking down with wonderment at the vivid figure, and instinctively Lieutenant Fulton drew her back. The woman saw the gesture and smiled bitterly:

"There are sometimes several motives a woman acts from, and one is enough for me to tell.'

Miss Geryon, older, broader and more sympathetic, understood the woman, and, stepping across the room, laid her firm, cool hand kindly upon that of the pariah, who raised her eyes.

"You understand?" she said softly.

"Yes, I understand," said the woman who had been his wife and now began her work of helping his victim to be a better woman.

"There is one thing more," Nickelson continued, his eyes soft with deep feeling as he looked at the noble woman he was so soon to call his wife. "Mrs. Coverdale, what was the real name of that man?"

"I protest," Mr. Coverdale said angrily, and yet sadly.

"Mrs. Coverdale, where did you meet him?"

For a moment a terrible faintness assailed the beautiful girl, then she said steadily:

"At Venice in company with my father."

"Had he any hold over you?"

"Yes," in a very low tone.

"May I unfasten this?" and without waiting for an answer Mr. Nickelson touched the broad band of gold upon the rounded arm of the wife of William Coverdale, and under his fingers it fell away, leaving a strange blue mark on the white flesh.

"What is it?" Mr. Coverdale cried, looking at his wife with mournful eyes.

With a trembling voice she returned:

"It is cruel, but I must tell my shame." At her words a shudder ran over her husband, and he put out his hands, but Nickelson motioned her to continue.

"My father was old and poor, but a gentleman and a good, true man. This monster became acquainted with him, and in some way induced him to forge a man's name to a check. I do not know who the man was, but this terrible man whom we all know as Mr. Charlemayne threatened to expose my poor father. At last they compromised. Mr. Charlemayne promised not to tell, provided my father gave him an acknowledgment. This mark upon my arm is the acknowledgment. It is my father's confession tattooed upon my arm."

A murmur of horror ran through the little crowd. Such persecution savored of the dark ages.

"I never believed that he was guilty, but thought he had done the crime in some strange, unguarded moment. It killed him, and when I, friendless, alone, and without a single cent in my pocket, was offered the love of this good, honorable man, I was weak enough to accept it without telling him of the shadow which lay upon me."

"Why, I knew it all the while," Mr. Coverdale cried in astonishment, "because it was my name which was forged."

The young wife looked up with an expression of adoration in her eyes, which was changed to one of fright when Mr. Nickelson asked once more:

"What was the real name of that man, Mrs. Coverdale?"

"I cannot—cannot tell," she moaned.

"You must for the good of all parties."

"Tell, my wife," Mr. Coverdale said softly.

"Then, if I must, it was William Coverdale; he is your son!" she cried in tones of anguish, and, the tension relaxing, she fell half fainting into the arms of her husband.

"My son still alive!" the poor man cried.

"He was killed this afternoon just after leaving your office, where he filled your heart with agony by defaming Mrs. Coverdale," said Nickelson, and Mr. Coverdale's earnest "Thank God!" was echoed by all present.

CHAPTER XX.

"Then crown her queen of the world."

The guests had all left, and Mr. and Mrs. Coverdale sat before a gas fire in her private sitting-room, although it was after 3 o'clock. She was still in her magnificent costume, and with the light of hope and love in her eyes, presented a very different appearance than she had as she stood by her husband's side welcoming their guests a few hours before.

Neither spoke for a few moments as they sat there, and then the man, raising his eyes, asked gently:

"Can you ever forgive me?"

"For what, my husband?"

"Doubting your love, my darling."

In answer she laid her little hand over his and both were silent for a few moments; then with a graceful gesture she rose and, seating herself on his knee, threw her arms about his neck.

"I have been so unhappy, but I tried to keep what I thought my father's wrongdoing and the fact that your son was still alive from you. He told me who he really was, proving his identity by taking me to his old room and opening a secret door in the desk that stands there. I screamed when I saw him do it, I was so frightened, and some of my guests who were on the first landing heard me, but I suppose explained it to their own satisfaction. He slipped out by some back passage."

"My poor, poor darling! Why or how I cannot explain, but I have won love such as few men possess, and my life shall be spent in making you perfectly happy," and he drew the young thing closer to his heart.

"I had another reason for wishing to keep clean the name of my husband," she said hesitatingly, blushing a bright crimson, which might have told the story to a more experienced man, but Mr. Coverdale only asked gently:

"And what was that, dear?"

"I asked you to take me away from all this whirl of society. Will you?"

"Yes, sweetheart, anything you want."

Mrs. Coverdale looked into the aristocratic, handsome face, gave a nervous little laugh, and then whispered something in his ear. Suddenly a rejuvenating light sprang into his face, blazed in his eyes, and, holding her lovely face from him, he cried:

"You mean——"

"Yes, yes, darling. Oh! how happy it does make me to have this to tell you," and he, with a reverence he had never felt before, deeply as he loved her, pressed his lips to hers as he whispered:

"A mother is a mother still,
The holiest thing alive."

The End.

Young man, if you don't believe that kissing is unhealthful, just let the girl's papa catch you at it.

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The Humorist's Rebuke.

Mark Twain and W. D. Howells were one day lunching in a cafe in New York. Two over-dressed young men entered, and the first said in a loud voice:

"Waiter, bring me a bisque of lobster, a bottle of wine and a chop. Just mention my name to the cook, too, so that everything will be done to my liking."

The second young man said:

"Bring me some sole with peas, and tell the cook who it's for."

Mr. Twain gave his order a moment later. He said in a loud voice: "Bring me a half dozen oysters, and mention my name to each of them."

Prospective Trouble.

Village Druggist—I understand the church committee has decided to raise your salary.

Village Parson—Well, I hope it isn't true.

Village Druggist—Why, man, are you crazy?

Village Parson—No: but I will be if I have to collect a larger salary. I have trouble enough collecting the small salary they pay me now.

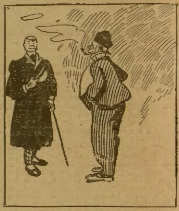
Warned in Time.

Old Dumpps—A penny for your thoughts.

Young Gumpps—I am trying to remember what it was my wife wanted me to bring home.

Old Dumpps—My! my! Don't you do it. Remembering the things a wife wants you to bring home is a mighty bad habit. By the time you've been married ten years, she'll be giving you a list as long as the tariff law.

Misfit.



Cyril—Ah, there, fawther, how do you like me new padded coat?

Cyril's Father—You want your head padded to match, that's all.

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Righting a Wrong.

"Naw," snapped the marble-hearted female, "I ain't got nothin' cooked fer enny low-down tramp."

"Youse hev got de wrong dope sheet, ma'am," replied the hungry hobo. "I'm er tramp, all right, all right, but I ain't no low-down one. I'm at de head uv me professhun. See?"

Work of Art.

Smith—Softkins recently began a correspondence with a woman who advertised for a husband, and after seeing her photograph he proposed by mail.

Jones—And they met and got married, eh?

Smith—Not exactly. They met, all right, but Softkins is now looking for the photographer with a gun.

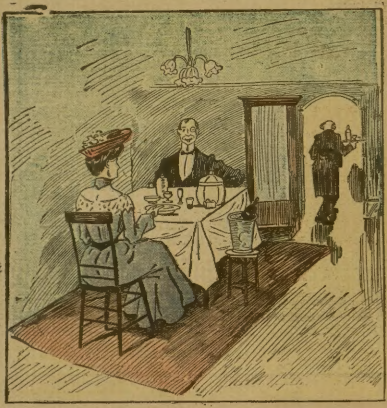
Same Thing.

"He's employed by the railroad company now, I understand."

"Yes; he has charge of the puzzle department."

"The what?"

"He makes out the time-tables."



The Frenchman was blowing about the height of the Eiffel Tower.

She—That's nothing to what we've got in America. We've got one so high that one-half of it telescopes into the other every night.

He—What's that for?

She—So the moon can pass without hitting it.

A Stylish Wedding.

"They say her wedding beggared description."

"Oh, more than that!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes. It beggared her father."

As Defined.

Little Willie—Say, pa, what is a confidence man?

Pa—A confidence man, my son, is a man who separates others from their money and their confidence simultaneously.

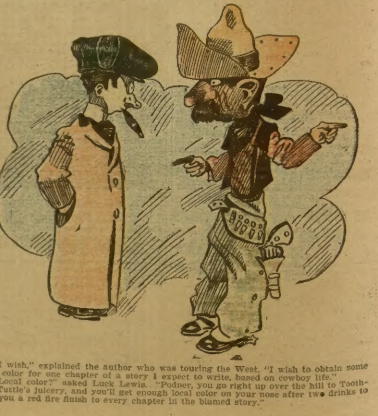
Disgracing Herself.

Mrs. Smartset—For mercy's sake, don't let me hear you talk about books in society again.

Cultured Daughter—Dear me! Why not?

Mrs. Smartset—Strangers will think you have been a cash girl in a bookstore.

Never kick a dog to which you haven't been properly introduced.



"I wish," explained the author who was touring the West, "I wish to obtain some local color for one chapter of a story I expect to write, based on cowboy life."

"Local color?" asked Luck Lewis. "Podner, you go right up over the hill to Toothless Tuttle's juicery, and you'll get enough local color on your nose after two drinks to give you a red fire finish to every chapter in the blamed story."

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Lively Times Ahead.

Druggist—No, I don't want any more cod-liver oil. We're overstocked now.

Drummer—But, my dear sir, look at this item in the Society Chitchat. It says that rubber overshoes are going out of fashion.

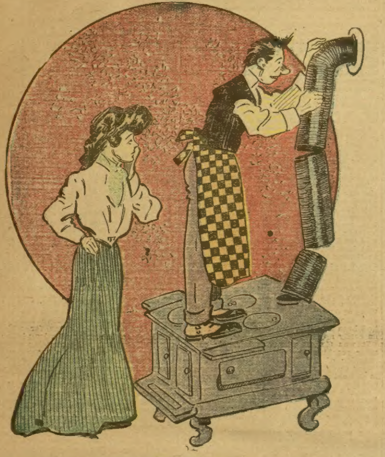
Druggist—Whoop! Send me a carload.

Nothing Serious.

The Heiress—And I've been introduced to quite a number of the European nobility.

Her Friend—Thinking of marrying any of them?

The Heiress—Oh, no. I don't intend to buy a title—I'm merely shopping.



She—Oh, dear, is it going to fall down again?

He—Fall down again? Why, condemn the thing, it hasn't quit falling down the first time yet!

Excelsior.

They were on the sofa side by side,
When he asked her to be his bride;
She murmured "yes," then he cried:
"Excelsior!"
Around her waist he placed his arm,
As if to shield her from all harm;
Once more he cried—now with alarm:
"Excelsior!"

One More Triumph.

Citizen—What has your last Arctic expedition accomplished?

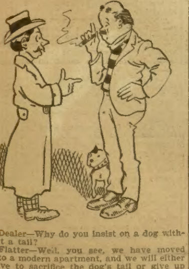
Arctic Explorer—What has been accomplished? Why, sir, we have fully and incontrovertibly demonstrated that babies can be born at the North Pale as well as the equator.

A Just Reward.

"Too bad about Dr. Killem falling into the well, wasn't it?"

"Serves him right. He should have attended to the sick and let the well alone."

Space Economy.



Dealer—Why do you insist on a dog without a tail?

Flatter—Well, you see, we have moved into a modern apartment, and we will either have to sacrifice the dog's tail or give up our bookcase!

Righteous Indignation.

Mrs. Youngma—Oh! I'm so boiling over with righteous indignation I don't know what to do. I'd—I'd like to bite somebody.

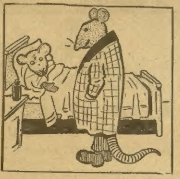
Friend—Whom?

"Whom—Why, those coarse, brutal, inhuman owners of the St. Quiet flats. They refused to rent to me."

"Everybody knows that they object to children, my dear."

"Yes, of course—but they objected to mine."

Didn't Cure Him.



Doctor Mouse—Well, Jackie, how's your cold today? I hope those mustard plasters that I suggested did you good.

Jackie—No, Doctor, they didn't. I ate three last night, and today I feel worse than ever.

Strictly Business.

Traction Official—No use talking. We can't afford to buy fenders for our trolley cars.

Inventor—But, stop. Just figure on it a little.

"Figure on it? You have already said that the fenders would cost ten thousand dollars."

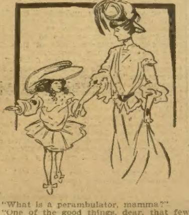
"Just so. But they will last for fifty years. Now take your pencil and paper and see how much wages you will spend in fifty years just for men to wash the blood off the wheels, not counting the soap."

The Usual Result.

Daughter—I purchased these goods at Catchem & Cheatem's.

Mother—Never heard of them.

Daughter—Why, mother! don't you remember how all the pretty places in the country were daubed up with their horrid signs, and how mad we all got? I'll never forget them in the world.



"What is a perambulator, mamma?"

"One of the good things, dear, that few men care to push along."

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Sources of 'Original' Jokes.

A collection of almanacs has been presented to the Missouri State Historical Society by W. H. Thomson, of near Columbia, reports the St. Louis Republic. The almanacs are 108 in number and date from 1795 up to the present time, there being one for each year. Included in the collection are two volumes of the "Western Comick Almanack," published in Cincinnati in 1834 and 1835, by N. and G. Guilford & Co. and Hubbard & Emmonds.

Although some of the earlier almanacs contain jokes and so-called humorous anecdotes, these two volumes are the oldest books in the library which are devoted exclusively to jokes. As an aid in tracing the pedigrees of present-day jokes, the volumes will prove invaluable.

In the almanac for 1804, quite a large space is devoted to "original, witty remarks and humorous anecdotes." Some of the jokes found in this number are still wandering and have appeared in recent humorous publications as original. The jokes are not accompanied by any key or chart, but so as to make the humor of the joke readily apparent to the reader they are all published under headings of "humor" and the parts of the anecdotes supposed to be funny were printed in italics. Some of the jokes which were thought exceptionally good were printed under the head "Very Funny."

There is nothing to indicate the authorship of any of the jokes. Some of the "very funny" jokes which appear in the almanac of 1804 were as follows:

"A dull Judge of the inferior courts of a sister State, having attended a variety of causes in the morning, went to dine at a friend's house with a most excellent appetite. Among the company was a witty barrister. The Judge, eating very heartily of a dish of salmon, observed that he had filled himself so full that he needed hooping.

"'Your Honor is much more in want of heading,' replied the witty barrister."

"A professor, lecturing on heat, observed that one of its most conspicuous properties was the power of expanding all bodies. A humorous student rose in his seat and asked: 'Is that the reason the days in warm weather are longer than those in cold?'"

"Mr. Hare and Mr. Fox had apartments in the same house and each had frequent visits from the bailiffs. One morning, as he was looking out of his window, Mr. Fox saw two of them at the door. 'Pray, gentlemen,' said he, 'are you Fox or Hare hunting this morning?'"

"In a newly raised corps, a soldier lately observed to his comrade, who was an Irishman, that a corporal was to be dismissed from the regiment. 'Faith, and indeed,' said the Irishman, 'I hope it is the corporal who is so troublesome in our company.' 'What is his name?' replied the other.' 'Why, corporal punishment, to be sure,' replied Pat."

"A person who could not read a syllable took up a newspaper in a New York coffeehouse, and, holding it upside down, pretended to peruse the ship advertisements on the first page with attention. 'What news?' inquired a bystander. 'There has been a great storm in the West Indies,' replied the reader, 'the vessels are all upset.'"

"A country squire asked a Merry Andrew why he was playing the fool. 'For the same reason you do,' said he, 'out of want. You do it for want of wit, I for want of money.'"

The jokes which appear in the almanacs of 1834 and 1835 are illustrated with comic pictures, most of which are highly exaggerated caricatures. Some of the jokes, humorous remarks, puns and witticisms which were perpetrated in the "Western Comick Almannck" in 1834, and which have not yet outlived their usefulness, are the following:

"As a broker was folding some bank bills, a wag observed: 'You must grow rich fast. I perceive you readily double your money.'"

"A poor country hawker, being detected in the act of shooting a butcher bird, was taken before a justice. 'So, fellow,' cried the justice, 'you see fit to shoot without a license, do you?' 'Oh, no, Your Honor,' said the offender; 'I have a license for hawking.' So saying, he handed his peddler's license, and the bird shot being a hawk, he was discharged."

"When Alexander Gun was discharged from the Edinburgh customhouse the entry made against his name was: 'A Gun, discharged for making a false report.'"

"A doctor and the undertaker met;
They spoke of illness, fees, of trade and debt:
And well they might, for such a dismal day
Never was known for coughs and deaths.
Parting in fog they both exclaimed together:
'Good morning to ye, this is rare coffin weather.'"

"An undertaker, being asked what his business was, replied: 'I follow the physician's profession.'"

Pleasing a Hostess.

First Tramp—How did yer manage to get such a lot o' vittles from that sour old maid?

Second Tramp—I tole her I used ter work in a lookin'-glass factory, and I'd clean her lookin'-glasses if she'd give me a bite afterward.

"Huh! You worked!"

"No, I didn't. W'en she showed me the glasses, I told 'er they was so crooked they wasn't worth cleaning. She was mighty tickled to find that her lookin'-glasses lied.

A Reasonable Request.

Husband—My dear, I want to ask you one favor before you go off on that long visit.

Wife—A thousand, love. What is it?

"Don't try to put the house in order before you leave."

"It isn't hard work."

"Perhaps not. But think of the expense of telegraphing to you every time I want to find anything."

The Witch's Prophecy;

OR, GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY.

By ANNIE L. SMITH, author of "Oath-Bound," "Cuba's Dark Secrets," "Two Faces' Defeat," Etc.

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Begun in No. 13, March 26. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE HIDDEN ROOM.

"Fortunately, my wife, daughter, and Goldyl are visiting friends at Cincinnati, as I told you," said the old doctor, to Bright. "We expect them on the evening boat, and shall be home just in time to receive them. They are saved much of the worry of waiting until we make the exploration."

"You quite overlook the fact that I am anxious to meet my wife as soon as possible," broke in Legrand.

"The relations between the two families have been so strained since that terrible night that I think it best that your wife, with her parents, be summoned to Rockbrook. Have word sent by a servant from Edward Roscoe, with a message that will excite their curiosity rather than alarm. We must repair to Rockbrook and apprise your father of Philip's death, and abide by his decision as to where the body is to be conveyed, and where interred. What do you think of my plan?" asked Doctor Linnell.

"The most proper arrangement that can be made," assented Legrand. "Mr. Sunderland has certainly behaved badly in the matter."

"You are sure you understood the directions sufficiently to make no mistake in discovering the entrance to the hidden room?" asked Roy, turning to Bright, as they tethered their animals at the great gate and entered the grounds.

"I noticed the most minute details," returned Bright. "We detectives seldom miss instructions."

He produced a heavy key which he had taken from Philip's waistcoat pocket, and which, as he rightly conjectured, fitted the hall door, and without pausing they proceeded to the tower.

"One—two—three—four—five!" counted Bright, placing his hand upon the panels in the crimson chamber, where, in the dim light creeping between the shutters, the gladiator and tiger loomed up strangely life-like.

With a slight exertion Bright slid back the panel, revealing a staircase barely wide enough for a broad-breasted man to pass, winding far above them to the battlement, following the circular wall of the tower, and lost in the gloom above and below, for the scanty light struggling through narrow slits in the outer wall were barely sufficient to prevent the danger of stumbling. At the base was a broad stone flagging, and here the way was barred by an oaken, iron-clamped door. A key, bright as though in constant use, was suspended from a small chain attached to a ring imbedded in the wall.

Bright inserted the key in the lock; the narrow entrance swung easily, and the party entered a circular room, heavily paneled in oak, the walls half covered with pictures and costly mirrors. Of portraits was a group ranged in panels, side by side, five in number, the fifty turned to the wall. The first in the series was that of a mild-faced man of perhaps forty and labeled "Innocent Rosignolo." Upon his left was the portrait of a majestic woman, beautiful despite the cruel curve of the lip and the smouldering fire in the almond-shaped eyes.

"Bianca Rosignolo," read Gerald. "A woman capable of the most diabolical acts, despite her serpent-like beauty," he added.

By the side of the haughty lady was her counterpart in expression and feature, yet youthful, the portrait of a girl of fifteen.

"Lola Rosignolo," went on Gerald, reading the inscription.

"Otherwise Old Fan," said Roy.

"Amoret Rosignolo——" began Gerald.

"Ah!" cried Legrand, "the picture we saw in the hut. Mark the resemblance, sufficient to proclaim the original and our Goldyl mother and daughter."

The fifth was quickly turned to the light—the face of one whom all felt instinctively to have been a crafty, bad man; a face of extreme hauteur, and wicked, with cruel lips and flashing eyes.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Legrand, "look what a resemblance!"

"Carlos Bernero!" cried Roy. "The upper portion of the features are strikingly like Philip's, while the mouth and the haughty poise of the head the son inherited from his mother."

"Carlos Bernero, alias Antonio Castello, alias Leon Devereaux," grumbled Bright. "A chief of the Mafia, of which his son is actually a leader—Um-m-m-m! Like father, like son. This is the hidden chamber, but where are the occupants?"

They peered about the apartment, that was almost royal in all its appointments, the floor spread with rugs from Persian looms, the ottomans and sofas, the tables inlaid, and the statuettes, the entire outfit far surpassing the furnishing in the tower above. But, save for the presence of the intruders, the room was vacant. In their surprise they had nearly forgotten the object of their visit.

"Great heavens! where is my child—where is the maniac lady and the—the body?" gasped Legrand.

"Are we in an enchanted castle?" queried Gerald, looking about him in perplexity. "Are the occupants spirited away?"

"Neither, Sir Knight," replied a low, sweet voice, as a lady richly habited in garments that must have been in vogue a quarter of a century before, swept aside the folds of a velvet curtain veiling an alcove; "welcome, fair sirs, the ogress is dead and now lies in state awaiting burial. Cruel Elizabeth is absent, and I am alone to do the honors; the unfortunate Mary bids you welcome. Rejoice, for my long captivity is ended. My child sleeps here! Yonder lies the Borgia—dead—dead—dead!"

The words were almost a whisper. With one hand she drew back the curtain and Legrand sprang forward, clasping a sleeping infant in his arms. Upon a couch within the alcove the child had been lying, guarded by the prisoner, who was as ignorant of the fate to which she had been consigned as was the innocent babe.

She lifted the curtain of a second alcove where lay the remains of Madame Rosignolo. The features of the dead woman were livid and mottled with purple patches.

"See! The nature so long concealed has risen to the surface, fit marking of the cankered soul!" exclaimed the lady, with a theatrical wave of her thin, white hand. "For two days I have kept watch and ward, but now my service is ended. Noble knights, within the hour I leave the castle, and shall avail myself of your escort."

It had been decided to take her at once to Glenwood, and her fancy concerning an escort was most fortunate. The mortal remains within the hidden room must not be disturbed until viewed by the coroner, and in five minutes the chamber was closed and locked, and the captive lady, mounted upon Gerald's steed, was free under the broad light of day and in the fresh air of heaven, and though years had elapsed since she had been seated in a saddle, she sat almost as easily as did her companions.

It was Gerald who was her sole escort after reaching the crossing, while the remainder of the party hastened to Rockbrook to communicate the astounding news to the old man who had suffered for weary months.

Mrs. Linnell, Edna and Goldyl had but just returned from their journey, and in accordance with the strict orders of their master, the servants had mentioned not a word of the wonderful story.

To say that their astonishment and joy nearly deprived them of power of speech would but convey the truth, and the poor lady was received with a warmth of affection to which Amoret Roscoe had long been a stranger.

In a few hours Roy arrived, coming directly from Rockbrook, where all explanations had been made, and whither he desired the ladies to accompany him. A messenger had been dispatched to the Eyrie, and at Rockbrook Legrand, with his infant son, awaited the coming of the young wife and mother.

As Gerald could give but an outline of old Fan's death-bed confession, they waited with what patience they could summon for a full revelation from the lips of Detective Bright.

The brief note, requesting the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Sunderland, with their daughter, at Rockbrook, for the adjustment of a most important matter brought the husband and wife at once, and their carriage rolled up the driveway as the Glenwood party arrived. Detective Bright was present, and already the coroner and his assistants had performed their duty at the hut and in the hidden room.

It had been rightly decided that some preparation should be made for the joyful surprise awaiting Aglae, and Legrand, with Roy and the infant, had been closeted in an adjoining room, while Detective Bright related his story, gradually leading up to the denouement.

The first surprise came when, in the pale, fragile lady, arrayed in elegant but old-time robes, Aglae recognised the visitor at the Eyrie, whose dignified manner betrayed nothing of her aberration.

It was a wonderful story to which they listened, the rubicund face of Mr. Sunderland paling when the kidnaping of the child and Philip's participation was the subject matter, but he drew a long breath of relief when he discovered that either from lack of knowledge or from politic motives his name was not mentioned.

Gradually he led up to the return of the two who had been supposed dead, but the shock was almost too much for the delicate young wife when her husband glided into the room, a few moments after Detective Bright had placed her child in her arms.

Joy seldom kills, and after a little she rallied from the tension her nerves had sustained, and her face shone with the great happiness that had been vouchsafed.

Mr. Sunderland was the loudest in his denunciation of Philip, denominating him a scoundrel, a villain, a robber and a murderer.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT.

Neither of the dead was robed for the burial, as contagion was feared, and in a lonely spot within the dell, mother, daughter and son were laid.

The citizens were horrified when they learned that the man they had known as Philip Roscoe was in reality a leader in the secret organization at whose crimes they had shuddered.

"The man was terribly afraid that there might be a hidden will bequeathing Campion Towers to Mrs. Eveleth, and in such case the estate might come to her son," Detective Bright said, when he produced the papers he had taken from Philip relative to Goldyl's parentage, the order and the bank book, for by the death of her stepmother and her half-sister Amoret Roscoe was left sole heir of the Rosignolo estate and the funds in bank.

"I shall be well satisfied whether or not there is a will, whether or not it is discovered," smiled Roy.

Amoret had listened attentively to the details, her dusky eyes fixed upon each speaker. The three physicians observed her narrowly, and her evident effort to recall the past was looked upon as a propitious augury. When Goldyl was mentioned her face paled and flushed; and they hoped that the cloud upon her memory was slowly dissolving.

Her home was at Glenwood, in the company of her daughter, and there was no restraint of bolts or bars, although a constant but secret watch was kept lest she might wander from their protection.

Every day she was allowed to ride, usually preferring the saddle to the coach, and one morning when upon an excursion her horse suddenly shied as a fragment of paper fluttered across the path directly in his face. The rider was thrown violently to the ground, her head striking against a tree trunk.

For days she lay in a darkened room, in the delirium of fever, attended by her affectionate daughter, but the time came at last when, weak and languid, but with an unclouded mind, Amoret Roscoe mingled with the family, and when the autumn winds blew shrilly around Glenwood her health was fully restored, and Memory had clasped her long-severed links.

The villa overlooking the Bay of Naples, her marriage, the fearful death of her husband, the incarceration in the hidden room, the birth and disappearance of her child, all were remembered. She had witnessed Lola's fearful plunge down the stone staircase, and her story fully corroborated Old Fan's confession.

Lazello had fulfilled his promise, for he it was who had found Roy in the streets, ill and nigh to death, and who had conveyed the stricken youth to the hospital, where he had been attendant, and it was Lazello who had nursed him back to life.

At the hospital gates they had parted, believing that they would never meet again, but by Old Fan's confession Lazello was fully cleared of the crime for which he had been condemned, and a long letter was written, containing the cheering assurance that he was free, and an invitation to attend the double wedding to be celebrated at Christmas, with the means for defraying the expense of the journey.

The legal steps necessary that Amoret might claim her inheritance had been taken and she was the undisputed possessor of a moderate fortune, and in view of her daughter's approaching marriage she remained at Glenwood. After his marriage Gerald would install his bride in a city home, whither her mother would accompany them. Goldyl laughingly asserted that she was sure a will was lying in ambush, and that Roy would become the owner of the Towers, which would be but strictest justice, as he certainly was entitled to a share in his grandfather's wealth. Besides, now that the mystery was cleared and the Specter Lady no longer haunted the tower, Edna need have no fear; then, it was so near to Glenwood.

It was Goldyl who insisted that a thorough search might be instituted.

"The Towers will be a fitting marriage portion," she said to Roy, "and as you are to become a benedict on Christmas eve, there is no time to lose. At the present date the house is mine, and if I choose to explore its mysteries I have the right."

It was finally agreed to make another search, and Goldyl insisted that Mammy Sue should be taken to assist in the work. Sue, now a white-haired rheumatic woman, long ago supenannuated, and passing her days quietly in the cabin that had been given her by her master, was taken to the Towers with the merry party. Soon bright fires were blazing upon the hearthstones, long cold; cheerfully the sunbeams shone through the windows screened for many a year by the heavy blinds, and anything but ghostly was the grand old mansion when the little party moved from room to room, Sue hobbling after, her face shriveled and seeming like a dried prune, her white eyebrows contrasting oddly with the red and yellow handkerchief twisted turbanlike about her head.

A pleasant, airy room was pointed out by the old woman as "de private 'partmen' o' Missy Em'lade," and the tears rolled down her cheeks as she reverently lifted a velvet-bound, gold-clasped Bible from the reading table, beside which stood an easy chair upholstered in faded crimson damask.

"Dis yer bressed book was all she had to comfo't her, de pore lamb!" sighed Sue, "an' likewise it am de bery 'dentical book she was a-readin' de night she was cut to pieces by dat mis'able, no-'count husban' o' hern."

A slip of faded satin ribbon was placed between the leaves.

"That must mark some favorite chapter," said Gerald as he took the volume from Sue's trembling hands and opened it at the page designated by the mark.

An envelope, yellowed by time, fell to the floor. The next moment Goldyl held it in her hand and broke the seal. Within was a closely-writen sheet and an embossed key.

"The will! The will!" she exclaimed. "Read it!"

Legrand took the paper.

"Yes," he replied, "an attested will, perfectly legal in all its provisions, and constituting Roy's mother sole heiress of Campion Towers, which, as her legal heir, Cousin Roy inherits."

They listened attentively while Legrand

read the document and explained the various provisions.

"Bress de Lawd! Dat am whar de pore honey done hide dat paper, fo' why? Dat ole debbie so pow'ful wicked he 'ouldn't dare tech de good book wiv a pa'r o' tongs fo' fear it 'ud burn he fingers; she couldn't 'a' found' no bettah place ter hide it from he!" exclaimed Sue, "an' dar's de key o' de money box, sho'."

The key indeed fitted the lock of the safe wherein was stored a small fortune in jewels, all the property of Roy.

On Christmas Eve a select company were assembled at Glenwood, for it was the bridal eve of Edna Linnell and Goldyl Roscoe.

The guests were the particular friends of the contracting parties, and the relatives, for the recent death of Philip who had so long been believed to be a Roscoe, forbade the pomp and ceremony that might otherwise have been expected at a double weddin. But the brides looked none the less lovely, nor the grooms the less noble, as they took the vows that gave to Gerald Linnell and Roy Eveleth two of the fairest daughters of Kentucky.

There was no bridal tour, the brides preferring to spend the honeymoon at Glenwood.

It required but slight formality of law to establish Roy's claim to his mother's inheritance, the business being concluded by Legrand, and at once an army of workmen invaded the Towers, where they held possession and high carnival until the mansion was thoroughly repaired and ready for occupancy. Most of the furniture was retained, as it suited the bride's taste.

The grounds were cleared, and when, in the budding spring, Roy and his bride took possession of the home that was to be the abode of happiness, no fairer domain could be found in the country round about, and with her friends about her Edna laughed merrily over her former fear of ghosts. No more was the Specter Lady of the Tower seen at the solemn midnight hour, but a lady strangely like in form and feature, but with the glow of health upon her face, was often a visitor, for Amoret Roscoe was always a welcome guest. Once only had she visited the hidden room, shuddering as she opened a dainty rosewood box where a stiletto lay, for upon the day preceding the night upon which she had unwittingly assumed the character of the Specter Lady, Lola had, in the spirit of wickedness that was her normal state, drawn the sharp weapon across the fingers of her helpless prisoner, cutting to the bone, and from these wounds the blood had flowed freely, giving to the poor lady the appearance of a blood-stained wraith.

Here, also, the cunningly contrived apparatus and lantern by which Old Fan had produced her weird pictures was hidden in a strong box with an alcove, and by this means, and her natural shrewdness, she had sustained her character as a witch.

Occasional instances of mysterious disappearances or cold-blooded murders have occurred at various times, but the Mafia, probably alarmed by the death of their chief, and fearing detection, withdrew from their haunts, and no trace of their presence remained. Lazello, freed from the fear of the law, had privately informed the authorities of their places of meeting, but the Mafia, who believed him dead, had no clew upon which to fasten the name of the traitor, and he escaped their vengeance.

In the lives of our friends the storm has been succeeded by calm and sunshine, and by the fireside at each happy home the parents relate, to the children that have been given them, the story of that night, long ago, when they attempted to solve the mystery of Campion Towers.

The End.

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THE NEW MINISTER.

BY HELEN FORREST GRAVES.

"What do you think, Aunt Violet? The new minister is coming tonight!"

Miriam Blake and her cousin, Effie Towers, burst into the quiet, old-fashioned sitting-room like twin gales of wind, so fresh and sudden and inspiriting were they.

It was a very cheerful apartment, with the crimson carpet flooded with October sunshine, the canary singing from his cage among the geraniums in the window seat, and a bright wood fire crackling from burnished brass andirons on the hearth—for Aunt Violet loved an open fire and adhered to it through all the modern innovations.

She was a woman past thirty, yet very pretty withal—a woman whose type of face and form would always remain youthful. Brown hair, with rippling lights of gold upon its surface; blue-gray eyes, large and shaded with long lashes; a complexion where the fresh, white and red betokened perfect health, and a smiling, cherry-red, melting mouth, whose smiles betrayed a singularly regular set of teeth—Miss Violet Brown was perhaps quite as attractive in her mature womanhood as she had been in her fresher girl days.

"Tonight?" said Aunt Violet. "And is the parsonage all in readiness?"

"All prepared, I believe. And what do you think, Aunt Violet," went on Miriam, with girlish eagerness, "of old Mrs. Marsh going there with her two daughters, to prepare tea and make it 'sort o' homlike,' as she says, for him the first night?"

And Violet smiled over her crochet.

"Why," struck in Effie Towers, "the Marsh girls are as old as the hills'"

"Not quite as old as the hills," said Aunt Violet, quietly. "Sarah Marsh is about my age, and Mehetable cannot be more than a year or two older.'

"Oh, Aunt Violet!" said Effie coaxingly, stealing both arms around Miss Brown's slender waist, "nobody ever thinks of your being old!"

"It's an indisputable fact, nevertheless," said Aunt Violet, serenely

"Aunt Violet," said Miriam, suddenly, as she sat looking her aunt full in the face, "how I wish Mr. Smith would fall in love with you!"

Aunt Violet shrugged her shoulders.

"My dear child, isn't Brown a sufficiently common cognomen but you want me to change it into the still more hackneyed name of Smith?"

"I wasn't thinking of the name, Aunt Violet—I was only reflecting to myself what a splendid minister's wife you would make."

"I shall never make anybody's wife, Miriam."

"What nonsense!" ejaculated the gay girl. "Why, aunty, you are he prettiest of our whole set, yet, with your sweet-pea complexion and those big, innocent eyes of yours——"

But here Effie Towers interrupted, speaking gravely, with serious glance.

"I know what makes Aunt Violet speak so, Miriam—she had a disappointment years and years ago!"

"Aunty! Did you really?"

"'Years and years ago,' as Effie says, I had a lover," returned Aunt Violet, calmly.

"And what interrupted the current of true love?"

"I was foolish, and wished to test my power. Clarence—that was his name—was hasty and impulsive, and my folly incensed him. So we parted."

"And is he married now?"

"I do not know. I have never seen nor heard of him since. He was only spending the summer vacation, a college student, in our quiet village."

"What was his last name?"

"That's of no consequence, Miriam; do not let us disinter any more of the horrid past. I have told you my folly. See that you take warning by it."

And none of Miriam Blake's soft coaxings could win from Aunt Violet any further confidences.

"You are not an old maid, darling aunty," said Miriam, "but Sarah Marsh is, and I mean to enter the lists with her myself to win the new minister's favor. The parsonage would make a pretty nest for such a bird as I am, all embowered in roses and clematis, and full of delicious little bay windows and maple-shaded piazzas. I hope he's young and good looking.'

"He is just thirty-five," said Effie, "for Deacon Alden told me so."

"Did he say whether he was good-looking or not?"

"No, he didn't—as if Deacon Alden cared for his looks."

"Thirty-five—that is rather old-bachelorish, but a man isn't totally past reform at thirty-five," observed Miriam, pensively. "If Aunt Violet won't have him, I'll try my chance"

"I shall never marry," gravely reiterated Aunt Violet, with more seriousness than Miriam's light jesting way seemed to call for.

"If that's the case," said Miriam, "I'll go and rip up the breadths of my lilac lawn dress, and have the ruffles done up. One can't be to careful of one's advantage of costume at such a critical time, and I know Mehetable Marsh has a white dress, with blue rosebuds all over it."

"Miriam, what a little [illegible] you are!" said Effie

"Don't I tell you I need a minister for a husband, just to sober me down."

And with this Parthian arrow of retort, Miss Miriam quitted the room, with Effie following her.

Presently she came back again, dancing merrily into the room

"I've found out my future husband's name."

"What is it"

"A decided novelty—John Smith."

Aunt Violet smiled, and Miriam vanished once more, like a twinkling bit of thistledown.

Violet Brown sat gazing into the coral depths of the bright [illegible] that had fallen through the logs on the hearth. Somehow, in spite of her assertion of [illegible] and independence, she felt very [illegible] this October afternoon

"I'll go for a walk," thought Violet "Perhaps a little exercise will dissipate this gathering despondency."

She tied a round hat under her curls, put on a coquettish scarlet bolero, tasseled with white silk, which, according to her loving nieces, "made her look like a delicious little Red Riding Hood," and went out into the fresh autumn air, where the woods, all radiant with gold and crimson glories, were showering their leafy trophies on the walks below, as she entered their silent aisles

"Autumn," she thought, sadly, "how soon it has come upon us! And it is but a little while since spring was here with her dew and roses. My spring has vanished, too, and, unlike the sacred seasons of birds and blossoms, it will never return to me again Heigho! I wonder what I was born into this world for. I don't seem to be of very much use to anybody."

Violet was thinking thus, a little pensively, as she sat on a moss-enameled fallen tree, tapping the drifts with the point of her parasol, and letting the fresh, fragrant wind blow the gold-brown curls back from her forehead. She was not thinking how picturesque was her attitude, nor how beautiful her face looked in its oval clearness, with a pink flush on each cheek, but both these facts struck the perceptions of a tall stranger, carrying a valise in his left hand, who had just crossed the stile leading from the main road, and entered the illuminated glow of the autumnal woods.

He raised his hat with a courteous motion as Miss Brown started at his advancing footsteps.

"I beg your pardon; I fear I have unintentionally startled you."

"Not at all." Violet looked up earnestly at his face as she answered.

"Perhaps you can direct me to the shortest cut across these woods to Millhambury? I am not quite certain as to my localities."

"You are on the direct path now, Clarence Smith"

He started, in his turn, and gazed scrutinizingly into her face.

"I thought it was familiar to me!" he exclaimed, "and now I know it. Violet! who would have thought of meeting you here?"

Violet Brown trembled like an aspen leaf, but she strove to control herself.

"The world is full of just such chance meetings, Clarence."

She had half turned away, but the gentleman had put down his valise, and was evidently inclined not to part with her so readily.

"Stop, Violet—do not go away. My love! I have so longed to see you, all these years. Tell me that you have not entirely forgotten the past—that you have still a word of tenderness for the wayward lover who flung away his brightest chances of happiness long ago! Violet, you were my first love—be my last!"

"Do you still love me, Clarence?" she asked, the blue-gray eyes softening to a strangely tender brightness.

"Do I breathe and exist still? I tell you, Violet, my heart is like the century plant, which only blossoms once—and its blossoming is in the sunshine of your love alone."

She was silent—lovelier than ever, Clarence thought, in the momentary indecision, the shy hesitation of her manner, as she stood under the old trees, a gold-tinted leaf drifting down here and there around her, and her tremulous hands clasped to hide their flutter as far as might be.

"Violet, darling! tell me that you love me."

"I love you, Clarence!"

There is a Garden of Eden created anew for every happy pair of lovers—and Clarence and Violet stood in Paradise now!

"But, Clarence," resumed Violet, when the first all-absorbed words and glances of their new happiness had been exchanged; "I don't comprehend this at all. How did you come here? and how did you know where to find me?"

"I did not know where to find you, Violet. Chance has been my friend here; and as for my opportune appearance on the scene, it is very easily accounted for. I have been called to take charge of the parish of Millhambury"

"Clarence, you are not the new minister?"

"But I am the new minister.

"His name is John Smith."

"I beg your pardon, my darling—it is John Clarence Smith."

And Violet's surprise was sufficiently amusing to the reverend gentleman at her side

Old Mrs. Bezabel Marsh and her two elderly, hard-favored daughters, had made the parsonage all ready, even to lighting the evening lamps on the study table, and poking the clear anthracite fire that burned in the dining-room grate.

Miss Mehetable had turned the tumbler of crimson currant jelly into its cut-glass dish, and disposed the green sprigs of parsley to the most striking effect round the thinly cut slices of boiled tongue, while Miss Sarah made a Leaning Tower of Pisa of the buttermilk biscuits, and whisked the flies away from the sugar basin, in readiness for the expected guest, and like the heroine of song, "still he came not!"

"The kittle's boilin' and the tea's all steeped," said Mrs. Marsh, as she sat in the big rocking chair in front of the fire. "It'll be spiled if he don't come pretty soon"

"He'll be here presently now," said Miss Mehetable, loosening her curls from their confining papers. "Oh, ma! I wonder if he'll be pleased with what we've done"

"He can't help it," said Mrs. Marsh, mentally congratulating herself on her double chances of becoming the minister's mother-in-law. But the words were yet on her lips and the triumphant reflections yet in her mind, when a knock came softly at the door, and Miriam Blake entered, rosy with her long walk through the frosty autumn twilight.

"Have you heard the news?" asked Miriam. "I thought I'd come over and tell you. The new minister has come"

"Sakes alive!" ejaculated Mrs. Marsh

"I don't [illegible]," said Miss Mehetable.

"Oh, but he has, for I've seen him. And you needn't stay here any longer, for he has concluded to remain at our house tonight.

Mrs. Marsh and her daughters both stared

"What on earth does it all mean?" demanded the elder lady.

"I'll tell you a very, very [illegible]," cried the delighted Miriam. "[illegible] beau of Aunt Violet's, and the [illegible] has been renewed, and my dear little blue-eyed aunt is to be the minister's wife the very next month that ever dawns upon us!"

"Good gracious!" [illegible] Mrs. Marsh.

"Well, I never!" [illegible]

"I shouldn't think," venomously commented Mehetable, "that he'd want to marry an old maid."

"There are more old maids than one in the world," observed Miriam, philosophically. "So, if you'll kindly lock up the house, I'll take the key back to my new uncle-that-is-to-be. I had thought of setting my cap at the new minister myself, but I cheerfully yield the palm to Aunt Violet."

She tripped home through the dusk, laughing to herself at the discomfiture of the Marsh family, and Aunt Violet and Mr. John C. Smith were sitting cozily together over the fire when she returned, and, as she passed through the room, she only paused to throw her arms round Violet's neck and whisper,

"What do you think now about never marrying, Aunt Violet?"

Equal to the Occasion.

Domestic—Oh, please, mum, what shall I do? Half the soup is spilt, and the boarders is at the table.

Mrs. Slimdiet (firmly)—Empty the box of red pepper into what's left. There will be enough then.

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"George, dear," said the bride of three weeks, "I wish you would telephone to the liveryman before it is too late."

"All right, darling," answered George. "What am I to say to him?"

"Tell him," said her bridelets, "to send up a pound of liver in time for breakfast to go with our bacon."

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BOYS AND GIRLS CORNER

The Young Castaways;

OR

MAROONED ON A SAND-KEY.

BY ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

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CHAPTER I.

TWO OF A KIND.

As the sun of a November day crept over the watery horizon of the old Atlantic somewhere off the coast of Florida, his first rays fell upon a strange object that rose and dipped with the heaving bosom of the vast deep.

As far as the eye could reach there was no sign of land, nothing to break the dull monotony of sea and sky.

Undoubtedly there had been a riotous time of late, for the great rollers were still swelling sullenly, though their fierceness was a thing of the past.

This floating object, now on the crest of a billow and anon sliding down into a valley, had the appearance of a wreck on a diminutive scale. In fact, it proved to be the remains of what had once been a staunch single-hand cruiser, such as bold young Corinthians delight to trust their fortunes to while enjoying trips along the protected waters of the Atlantic sea-board.

The mast had been carried away bodily by the savage gusts of wind that had swooped down upon the luckless adventurer and apparently the only thing that kept the craft from disappearing under the surface was the fact that several air-tight, galvanized chambers had been arranged for in the building of the little cruiser.

Such a diminutive craft could never have been constructed for outside work, and her presence on the treacherous Atlantic must therefore be the result of an accident.

At any rate the crew of the mosquito craft had not been washed overboard when the mast and sail were carried away, for crouched aft could be seen a drenched and forlorn figure, that ever and anon raised upon hands and knees, when the boat crested a billow, searching eagerly for some sign of a friendly sail, or a glimpse of land to leeward.

The castaway did not appear to be more than a lad of some sixteen or seventeen summers, though well proportioned for his age, and with the rugged bronze of health that could only come from an outdoor life, upon his face.

Though naturally anxious concerning his condition he was not given to alarm, such as might have been his portion while the storm was at its height, with the cruel waves dashing over the waterlogged craft and seeking to tear him loose from the lashings with which he had been sensible enough to secure his person to a thwart.

"Twenty hours of this sort of thing has knocked all the fun out of it for me, and I'd give considerable to set eyes on a sail, even if only some sponger of the sand keys. Boat a wreck, provisions soaked, and the whole blessed expedition gone to the dogs. Ugh! I never want to repeat that experience again. Fifty times I thought my time had surely come, yet here I am with what is left of the outfit, drifting goodness knows where, and as hungry as a hawk. Wonder if I could lay hands on a snack, no matter what shape it's in. Well, here goes for a try, anyhow."

Evidently the forlorn castaway thought to put an artificial courage in his heart by thus communing with himself, after the manner of many persons similarly situated with regard to menacing peril.

He believed in action, at any rate, for suiting his words he began a systematic method of fishing down into the submerged portion of the boat's interior, dragging various articles into view, until finally an exclamation of satisfaction announced that he had struck oil in some fashion.

It proved to be a small chest, possibly fifteen by thirty inches, and when he had whipped the lid open, some eight tins, each with a capacious screw-top, were revealed. Evidently this was the "grub-chest" of the expedition.

He eagerly seized upon a certain can which he appeared to know by some subtle instinct, or from long familiarity, for when he had whipped the lid off and inserted his hand, it was to draw out some hard-tack, or ship-biscuit, together with a bit of cheese.

He fell to like one half starved, and presently, feeling a thirst, picked up the water can lying between his feet, to indulge in a swig from its brackish contents, the liquid having been secured at some rude spring along the Georgia coast.

And possibly Teddy McGregor had never enjoyed a meal better in all his young life, since it is appetite that usually regulates these things for us. And he was frightfully hungry after his long battle with the savage sea.

By the time he had finished, the waves had very sensibly diminished in volume, a fact he noted with immense satisfaction, since it was difficult work resisting their coaxing invitation to leave his perch and trust to their embrace.

The little boat no longer carried on like a crazy thing, and it was even possible for an agile chap to stand erect in order to take a better survey than had as yet fallen to his lot, though the sensation reminded him of trying to ride a bareback horse in a circus, an experience that had once fallen to his fortune.

So he stood there and turned his eyes over the tumbling sea, of course spending most of his time in following with his keen vision the ragged horizon to leeward, since his hopes lay in that direction.

As he turned with a sigh of bitter disappointment, to spend a last moment in a perfunctory survey of the quarter from whence his line of flight had proceeded, he suddenly gave utterance to an exclamation of surprise and delight.

Being to the west, there was no need of shading his eyes with a hand in order to keep the sun from blinding him, and now that the scud had ceased to fly through the air, he could distinctly see a vessel of some sort bearing down upon him.

A second look caused his feeling of delight to quickly subside, for it was plain to be seen that the craft thus approaching could be no less than a derelict, since one of her rails did not much more than clear the waters' edge, and what sails were bent on her masts had been tattered into ribbons by the wolfish wind.

This Teddy was gifted with a happy nature that could see great possibilities in what might appear a disappointment to others; and consequently he began to figure how sensibly his chances would be increased by a change of base by leaving the diminutive wreck for the one that possessed greater bulk.

He even fished an oar out of the flooded interior and began to scull his clumsy craft after the fashion of one who knew how to get the best results from such a proceeding—his design being to place himself more surely in the way of the derelict than chance had chosen to do for him.

The other vessel, catching so much more of the early morning wind, was drifting at the rate of two knots to his one, so that it must have left him in the lurch but for the artificial means of propulsion resorted to.

And it may be set down as certain that he strained his eyes good and hard as the rival wrecks approached each other, in the endeavor to find out whether the schooner had any living soul aboard.

To his intense disappointment he saw nothing to indicate such a thing, and was forced to believe that it had been wholly abandoned by the crew, when the water gained so fast that it appeared as if the vessel must sink at any moment.

He had quite a bit of a tussle at the end, in order to accomplish the object in view; but the result was satisfactory, since he found a dangling rope to which he could fasten the painter of his once proud craft; after which he swarmed aboard in approved piratical style.

The slanting deck of the schooner was a sad spectacle of wreck and ruin, though the young fellow felt relieved not to discover any signs of drowned men about.

He was curious to discover what sort of a bonanza he had happened upon, and immediately started below, to find in the cabin just the same confusion as on deck, with the water flooding the floor to the depth of a foot or more, and almost filling some of the adjoining closet-like rooms.

While he was prowling in the cook's galley, discovering an abundance of edibles, such as they were, he believed he heard a sound that had a different ring from the groaning and squeaking of the ancient ship's timbers.

This startled him more or less, and gave him the idea that possibly he might not be the only living thing aboard; so he began a hot hunt high and low, though without success until it occurred to him that he had a voice and should utilize the same.

Surely that was an answering hail, indistinct though it seemed.

"Help! come below and let me out—in the cabin—help!"

Teddy felt a thrill. It was not alone that he realized he had a companion in exile, but the strange fact of this unknown party being fastened in one of the several dingy staterooms connected with the cabin.

He had looked into a couple while prosecuting his search, but managed doubtless to skip the very one that had an occupant.

At any rate he now hastened back, calling reassuringly as he went, for it seemed to him as though the cries had something of human agony connected with them.

It was easy to locate the door, but being stoutly made it resisted his persuasive attempts to open the same, even as it had long done with respect to the party fastened beyond, with no chance of even climbing out through a window, such was the absurdly small size of the bullseyes lighting the cubby-holes dignified with the name of staterooms.

Teddy remembered seeing an ax lying near by, and this he seized on with eagerness. Then, warning the prisoner to stand back while he attacked the door, he proceeded to make kindling wood of the obstruction in approved style.

When an opening had been made sufficiently large to admit the passage of an ordinary man, he called to the other to come out, and was vastly surprised as well as pleased to see a lad of about his own age creep through the gap.

The other was a little pale around the gills, which might be excusable in the bravest, after a night penned in such a trap, with a constant fear lest the water creep up above the bullseye, and cause his death from suffocation, not to mention the chances for a sudden plunge of the craft to the bottom.

His first act was to clutch hold of the other and wring his hand as though it had been a pump.

"Gee, I tell you I'm glad to see you, old fellow! Help me up on deck where a fellow can get some air. I'm nearly dead for a good gulp, and some water. What's this a tin pannikin full? Gracious, how delicious it tastes with that salty crust in one's mouth! You didn't come any too soon, I'm telling you, for the old trap feels as if she was ready to take a last plunge mighty quick. The crew deserted while the storm was at its worst, and I'm thinking few or them could have lived through it; but they surely thought the old Nancy Lee was wallowing her last.

"Of course you wonder how they came to leave me behind, and fastened in a cubby-hole at that; but I'll tell you the whole story all in good time. It was the captain who did it, and he meant that I should never come back to New England again. Now, show me your vessel, my preserver, and let's get aboard as quick as we can for fear that this water-logged schooner sink under us."

Teddy scratched his head and looked grave. Then with a smile he led the other to the stern and, pointing to the pitiful little remnant of his once proud cruiser, remarked pathetically:

"I guess you'd better change your mind and stay here."

CHAPTER II.

THE LAST OF THE OLD NANCY LEE

When the full significance of the situation broke upon the mind of the deserted schooner's lone passenger he looked queerly at Teddy, and finally burst out into a laugh that had something of mirth in it, despite the gravity of their trouble, for after all he was only a boy, and disasters may easily assume a comical phase with youth.

"Well, I declare, if you weren't worse off than I was hanging to this old wreck. And is it possible that you were sailing in that little dinkey so far from shore? I've always considered myself somewhat of a venturesome chap, but I'd think a long time before taking such risks," he said, his hand laid affectionately on the arm of the other, for whom a sudden and natural affection had sprung up in his boyish heart.

It was a case of two kindred souls again—of David and Jonathan being brought together by stress of circumstances.

"Oh you give me too much credit. You see, I never dreamed of venturing outside, but was blown through one of the inlets of the Sound where I had been cruising, being on my way to Florida by the inside water route," declared Teddy, quickly.

"You must have had an awful time, and come mighty near going under. And to think of our meeting in this strange way! It looks as though we were intended to be companions in trouble. Anyhow, let's get acquainted, and perhaps we may find it possible to land on some desert island, to play Robinson Crusoe for a while."

Teddy introduced himself without hesitation.

"You see I'm a Canadian, and my father came from Scotland long ago. I've been left to do pretty much what I wanted for some years, and besides passing much time in the bush, camping in summer and with the loggers in winter, I conceived the idea of spending a season cruising in Florida, having read much about the delights of that country. So I had this craft built under my own eye, and started from the St. Lawrence in September, coming down through Champlain to the Hudson, and by degrees working south until that hurricane swept me through an inlet just when I was close to the border of the Promised Land.

"Some other time I'll tell you what a terrible experience I've had trying to keep afloat, and how gloriously glad I was to get a first glimpse of this old tub, for you see I

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"I have been with the ——— (a paper in [illegible] town), for nine years, and Mac has been with us all that time, and I do not know how much longer. Mac's full name is MacClellan. Before the Linotypes came in he was a good printer, and was one of the first to learn the machine, and is now, at about the age of 42, one of our very fastest operators.

"Last winter and the winter before, Mac, probably from constant night work and improper food, got badly run down, could not eat much, what little he did eat did not do him much good and he always complained he could not keep warm.

"I missed him for a while until yesterday I overtook him on the street going toward the office, and hardly knew the man; had it not been for the familiar walk I should surely have passed without recognizing him. He was stout, his face was round and ruddy and his eyes bright as I had never seen them before.

"I said: 'Mac, I hardly knew you; what on earth have you been doing to get so fat?' He replied, 'Grape-Nuts, nothing else. I started in on Grape-Nuts food three months ago when I weighed 126 and was feeling miserable, but now I weigh 160 and feel better than I ever felt in my life. I quit my old diet and went on Grape-Nuts, and that's the whole story.'" Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

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It was a well-dressed young man, with a sad, faraway look in his eyes, that stood on the steps as the lady opened the door.

"Excuse me, madam," he said, as he lifted his hat, "but could you direct me to the Home for the Friendless?"

"Do you mean to say that you are seeking it as a refuge?" she asked in surprise.

"I am, madam," he replied. "I am a baseball umpire."

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Mrs. Highstyle—What do you want, sir?

Tramp—Please, mum, if you would have one of your servants give me a cold cut of some [illegible]

Mrs. Highstyle—Certainly. Perkins! Tell the chambermaid to come and stare at this man without recognizing him.

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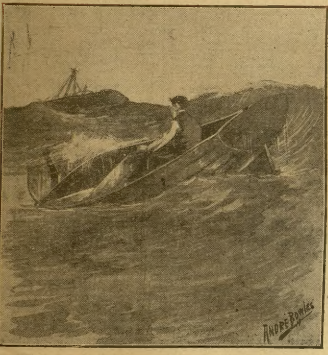

The craft approaching could be no less than a derelict.

didn't dream that it carried a fellow who was really in a worse position than myself. Now, let me hear something about you, please."

"Of course you're curious—who wouldn't be?—to find a chap fastened in a stateroom of a waterlogged schooner, and after my hinting that the captain was to blame for my almost going down to Davy Jones' locker. But you shall hear.

"First, my name is Maro Rolfe, and I am a New England boy all through. Being brought up in the city of New Bedford I've always been perfectly at home on a boat of any description, and even made one or two voyages on vessels that were principally my own property.

"Father left considerable property to me. It's the same old story about an uncle who was made guardian, and who would profit by my being out of the way. I've often read such things, but it didn't seem as though they could occur outside of story books; but I'm learning that real life is pretty much the same as we read about.

"Uncle Simon is one of those sly men, always rubbing his hands together and speaking in oily tones; but I didn't dream that he wanted to do me any harm, though truth to tell I knew he wouldn't have mourned greatly had I been fatally hurt when injured several times, once by falling from a yard-arm and again when swept overboard during a storm on the coast.

"Don't laugh at me when I tell you the way he succeeded in sending me to sea with Captain Clawson, on board the rotten Nancy Lee; for it's as old as the hills, I guess, though just as neatly worked today as when our grandfathers were boys.

"Uncle and I came aboard to say good-by to the captain, and the next thing I remember was when I came to my senses in a stuffy little hole, to find myself with a sick headache and the schooner far out at sea.

"The captain was a vile brute, and threw off the mask after a few days, telling me plainly that I would never go back to New Bedford.

"But what's the use going into details? Why, I could talk for an hour about how he abused me, and taunted me, believing I would never be able to bring him to book.

"Perhaps I may live to punish the rascal as he deserves, and it will be some satisfaction to me, I'm telling you.

"About the night of the storm. We were tossed about for hours, and when the leaks gained the crew got ready to leave the vessel.

"It was then Captain Clawson struck me and threw me in my den, fastening the door so that I could not possibly break out.

"There I stayed, suffering death many times until I thought I heard some one moving, and managed to shout, though my lips were that parched I could hardly make a sound.

"The storm was slacking up when they went away, and I've thought they could have saved the vessel and her cargo if such a thing had been to their liking; but do you know I've an idea uncle must have insured her for much more than she was worth, and that her loss was an arranged thing. In fact, I mean to investigate if such a thing is possible, to satisfy myself about the scuttling business, for such a crime has been done many times to beat the insurance companies, and I wouldn't put anything past that sailorman."

Thus briefly did the two young castaways introduce themselves.

Among boys what more was needed to constitute friendship? And if the bonds wanted cementing, surely their sharing a danger in common was quite enough to bring about such a union.

Why, presently they felt as though they had known each other for years, and discovered many mutual likes and dislikes that did much to add to the strength of the sudden friendship.

Their situation was so filled with peril that it demanded immediate attention; so they set about investigating the condition of the unlucky vessel, with the idea of determining just how long they might hope to keep afloat.

Slowly but surely the water was gaining, and while they might perhaps ward off the evil hour some by laboring at the pumps, the end was inevitable.

Having decided this question they believed it their best policy to fashion some sort of rude craft, upon which they might hope to keep afloat when the crisis arrived.

Both were possessed of considerable enthusiasm and sentiment, so that the work went on apace, and by degrees spars were lashed in a compact form, capable of resisting the action of the waves so long as not subjected to the fury of a storm.

This brought them up to noon.

They laid off for an hour, in order to rest and snatch a bite, for the sun shone with considerable power and exhausted them.

Conditions presented themselves, however, that urged a speedy resumption of their labor. The water continued to gain, and clouds crept up along the horizon as though promising another siege of bad weather ere long.

If such descended upon them they would be wise to have made all preparations in their power, in order to increase the chances for successful resistance.

Provisions were secured to the raft, as was also a keg of water.

Teddy, being something of a sportsman in his way, fished out his gun from the battered little cruiser, and made out to lash the same upon their projected float, since he declared there could be no telling what necessities might arise, when such a weapon would come in handy.

On his part Maro thought more of a hatchet he had found, and which he declared would prove of greater value should they live to reach some island shore.

The day was slipping away, and already had the sun been blotted out of sight by those ugly clouds that gave promise of severe weather.

Teddy had found an old marine glass in the cabin, and with this he swept the horizon in various directions, with as much eagerness and persistence as might have marked the lookout on Captain Kidd's piratical craft in these same historic waters many years back, while looking for a rich prospective prize, in the shape of a Spanish galleon bound across the sea with a cargo of silver from Mexico.

And suddenly he announced that he had made a discovery, handing the glass to his companion for his opinion.

Maro also made out the speck seen under the black cloud belt to be land, probably one of those sand-keys so numerous in that section—for they had come to the conclusion that the northerly storm must have carried them far to the south, so that they were now somewhere about the Bahamas.

The storm did not prove a severe one, and the old vessel held on tenaciously so that another dawn found them still aboard, drifting rapidly southeast, with nothing in sight all around.

Day followed day with many little alarms; but it seemed as though some especial Providence must be watching over the two lads, since the water-logged schooner continued to float, even though settling gradually nearer the surface of the sea.

Several times they had sighted other vessels in the distance, but the wreck lay so low, and, being without a sign of a mast, managed to escape observation, so that their frantic signals were useless.

It looked as though they might be picked up, if at all, far beyond the new territory of the United States, Porto Rico; for according to the crude efforts of Maro to find their latitude and longitude with what instruments the captain had abandoned when he fled, the schooner had covered many hundreds of miles in her long drift before the prevailing northwest winds, so that they were now on the borders of that mystic sea of romance and history known as the Caribbean, named after a tribe of savages once inhabiting the numerous islands dotting its blue surface.

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private practice with the most startling success. Though the years have passed its equal has never been found and with it thousands of weak men have brought about the cures they so much longed for. The doctor willingly sends the formula entirely free to any man who writes him for it, and they will find it a gift of lasting value. It is good for sexual weakness, lost manhood, nervousness, weak back, emissions, varicocele, lack of force, prostatic trouble, night sweats, inability and the many other embarrassing conditions that befall the sexually imperfect man. It creates an immediate social feeling, warmth and good nature, forces active blood to the muscular tissue, tones the nervous system and arouses bodily confidence. It makes the man of 65 as good as at 35, and the young man again eager for society and fit for marriage and parenthood. Satisfactory results are produced in a day's use, and a perfect cure in a few weeks, regardless of age, or the cause of your condition.

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Thus the time came when the long expected happened.

It was not in a storm, as they had frequently anticipated, that they were compelled to abandon the schooner, for the day was bright and exceedingly hot, with but a catspaw dimpling the listless surface of the heaving ocean.

Teddy made the discovery that a change was taking place.

"Water's making fast, and I think the end is near," was the way he put it to his companion.

Investigation proved what he said to be the truth, for some new break must have occurred, allowing an inflow of the sea; so that it was decided that their best policy would be to get the raft over the side as speedily as possible, in order to be ready for emergencies.

Those lads were wise for their years; but then there is nothing more likely to bring about such a condition as responsibility; and they had no older head to advise them now.

All had been arranged with block and tackle, so that a little hard labor accomplished what they desired.

Some more things were hastily thrown upon the raft, and then, as the signs of the doomed schooner going down began to be painfully evident, they jumped overboard and paddled some distance off.

When the final moment came, and with a strange sound not unlike a sob the old vessel sank out of sight, Teddy felt a lump in his throat, and neither could speak a single word for some little time.

CHAPTER III.

MAROONED FOR A CERTAINTY.

Teddy still clung to the marine glass as though in it he recognized a faithful friend that might sooner or later be of value to them.

For a brief time they sat there gaping at the spot where the vessel had gone down, marked with only a mass of bubbles that gradually vanished until nothing was left to tell the tale beyond some scattered bits of loose timber that came to the surface buoyantly, and continued to float.

"Well, she's gone, sure enough. Guess we didn't get away any too soon to avoid a ducking," remarked Maro, trying to look cheerful.

"It would have been more serious than that, I'm afraid," said Teddy, who knew the fierce suction brought into play when a ship is drawn beneath the waves.

"We look more like a speck on the water than ever," ventured the lad from New England.

"Still, we're all right yet, and my motto is never to give up the ship so long as you've got a bit of breath left. Others have been in worse situations than this, and lived to tell the story. We must do our level best to pull through, and nobody can do more."

So they talked cheerfully, and believed it a duty to look on the brightest side of the trouble, though many would have considered that there was little encouragement about their prospects.

Since they were now about on a level with the water, observations could not be expected to bring about such good results as when on the deck of a vessel, or clinging to her crosstrees; nevertheless, Teddy made frequent use of his glass, and about an hour before sunset discovered another of those islets so characteristics of the tropics.

It was far away, but the drift of their course seemed to be in that quarter, and consequently both of them were pleased to see unmistakable evidence that the island had trees upon it, since the setting sun glistened from the shiny green foliage, possibly of cocoanuts or the still more common palmetto, with its green leaves.

Thus the night set in.

It was dark and gloomy, for clouds had come hurrying athwart the fair sky, and the young moon was obliterated.

It seemed cruel that they should be threatened with another blow just at this critical stage of their adventure, when there was at least a chance to land upon a friendly shore.

Then the wind began to rise, and waves splashed over the raft.

The boys were soon wet through, but this caused them no inconvenience, with such a grim prospect for more serious things staring them in the face.

Familiarity with danger may lesson its terrors somewhat, but surely no healthy young mind can face death without more or less terror; and what with the howling wind, the tossing sea and the extreme difficulty which they experienced in maintaining their hold on the now shifting raft, the boys could be excused for feeling scared.

At the same time they kept their heads about them, and tried to cheer each other up by occasional words of comfort, shouted almost at the top of their voices.

How long could the raft hold out? That seemed to be the leading and most important question, for the spars had only been secured with ropes, and these lashings must be chafed by the constant rubbing and grinding, until finally eaten through they would allow the various timbers to be torn asunder.

When that occurred our lads must expect to find themselves struggling in the angry sea, with their chances considerably reduced.

Among other things which they had secured from the wreck of the Nancy Lee had been a number of life preservers, which, though rather the worse for wear and age, might still prove of benefit in a struggle for existence in the flood of waters.

They had each fastened several of these to their persons, and hoped to benefit from the same should the worst come upon them.

How long this lasted neither ever knew. It might have been hours, judging from the strain which racked them, body and mind.

They were being tossed about very much after the style of a chip, upon the vast expanse of riotous water.

Maro knew the raft was beginning to go to pieces in spite of their frantic endeavors to keep it whole, and he feared that the dreaded moment must be close at hand when they would no longer be able to keep one another company, but torn apart each would have to fight for existence against the fury of the monster that sought new victims.

It seemed as though the clamor of the storm had doubled during the last few minutes, and yet Maro did not see how that could be.

Suddenly he became apare of a familiar pounding sound amid the various throbbing noises around them, and which he believed could only be caused by the billows beating a sandy stretch of shore.

Then they must have been driven close to the island, which had been sighted before night closed in upon them.

Oh, if they could only manage to get out of this mad swirl of waters, and feel the solid ground beneath their feet! Just then such a thing appeared to be the greatest luxury in the world.

He tried to communicate his intelligence to his chum, and while unable to catch what Teddy shouted back, he believed the other must have divined what he meant.

It was fortunate that such a crisis had come before they were too exhausted to make a fight for it.

When a billow that was more strenuous than any preceding it had torn the raft asunder and allowed them to cling to a single spar, they began to strike out in a puny fashion for the shore. At least it appeared puny when contrasted with the fierce energy of the storm demon against which they pitted their efforts.

Several times Teddy feared the end had come, when swallowed in a smother of yeasty foam he felt the spar being almost torn from his rapidly weakening clutch; but Young Canada had a tenacious desire to remain in the land of the living, and he renewed his hold as well as the conditions allowed.

It was with a thrill of gratitude that he felt his feet strike the bottom, although the next instant he found himself swimming again, buoyed up more or less by the cork life preservers under his arms.

Again this same thing happened, and it seemed to Teddy that they were now in water even more shallow than before, a fact of tremendous significance, since it meant that they were being surely pushed ashore.

And his companion had by this time guessed the same thing, as a shout during a temporary lull in the roar announced.

By a united effort they managed to gain a footing the next time there was a recurrence of the sand-touching phenomenon, and even staggered forward a few paces before being caught up by a rushing inflow of salty water.

One thing assisted them. Both lads had known considerable of life on the ocean, and were well acquainted with such little tricks to cheat the grasping suck of the tide as are common among shore dwellers of the coast, though familiarity never breeds contempt for the mighty monster abiding in the sea.

Finally a mighty effort emancipated them from the clinging grasp of the water, and soaked to the skin they staggered out of the deep pretty much like drunken men.

Never mind, it seemed good enough to know that they had found a refuge amid all this wild turmoil. Though perhaps later on when a new and varied assortment of troubles came upon them they might even consider that there could be other things just as promising of a speedy death as being sucked down by the breath of the insatiable sea.

Nothing could possibly be done while the darkness lasted, so they moved off inland a bit, and finding shelter behind a hummock, tried to talk the situation over, though the noise of the pounding billows, together with the rush of the wind, made talking an effort.

Pretty soon Teddy found his lips quivering, for what with their soaking, together with the violent efforts put forth, the wind felt actually cold.

A fire promised relief, if only one could be started.

Teddy declared he had matches in a waterproof safe in his pocket, an announcement that his friend greeted with delight.

Together they set about finding material for a blaze.

This is never lacking where palmettos grow, since the dead stalks and leaves offer fine tinder, ready to flash into a blaze at the scratch of a lucifer.

So it was that presently a flame shot into the air, just around the point of land where a little cove seemed to set in, and once the fire had been started both lads busied themselves in accumulating a sufficient supply of material to keep it going.

Ah! this was something like, and if all shipwrecked mariners could fare as sumptuously there would be little cause for complaint.

In this manner did they put in the night.

While one slept the other stood guard, not that they anticipated the presence of any dangerous beasts on the sand island, but simply because they were nervous and thought it best to be on the safe side.

That was a night neither would ever forget as long as they lived.

It seemed to be never ending; and the storm, while short-lived, was a howler so long as it kept up.

It was while Teddy stood guard that the dawn came. Long before the clouds had parted and allowed the silvery stars a chance to look down upon the rough camp of the two castaways, so when the east began to redden Teddy knew the sun must soon appear to brighten things up and give them good cheer.

He bustled down to the water's edge in the hope that some of the things they had upon the raft might have been flung on the shore; and finding that this was indeed the case he busied himself in dragging such articles out of reach of the rising tide.

While thus occupied he was joined by his fellow prisoner, who also entered into the business with a zest.

Some of the food was so watersoaked as to be utterly worthless, but other portions had not been injured, so that starvation did not immediately stare them in the face, at any rate.

Having eaten, their next thought was in connection with the island upon which they had been so providentially cast, and which

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might be their home for many moons. It became an object with them to explore their domain, in order to ascertain its dimensions.

Teddy was uneasy, for he understood that there were times when the dreaded West India hurricane originated around the Leeward Islands, and in its fury devastated Porto Rico. At such times small sand-keys were utterly overwhelmed and blotted out of sight, to reappear again perhaps at a later period of calm.

Of course the presence of these trees gave them reason to hope that the bit of land upon which they had found refuge might not be in this floating class, though there could be no telling when its day might come.

These vague fears were soon laid at rest, for their territory appeared so spacious, and the disturbed sea was so rapidly becoming quiet again, that it seemed ridiculous to suspect evil from such a tame source. How easy it is in the midst of peace to forget war's alarms!

The few trees were clustered about the northwest end of the island, as though this region might be reckoned the least liable to inundation, a fact that gave them the idea of making their headquarters in the same quarter.

Transporting their lumber and other things of value took up the greater portion of the morning, so that it was rather late in the day when they set to work building a shelter.

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this thrilling story of adventure. Cameras and patterns are still being forwarded free to each subscriber. See advertisements on pages thirteen and fifteen.

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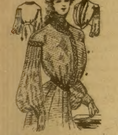

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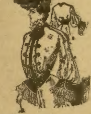

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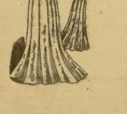

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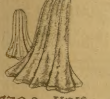

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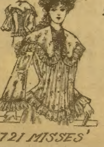

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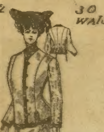

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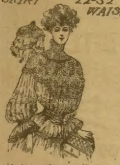

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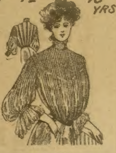

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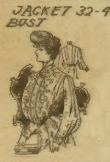

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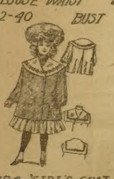

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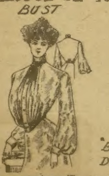

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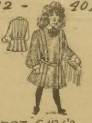

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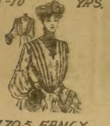

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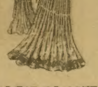

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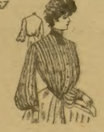

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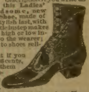

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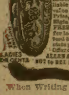

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FOR YOUTHFUL EYES

TWO SIDES OF IT.

There was a girl who always said
  Her fate was very hard;
From the one thing she wanted most
  She always was debarred.
There always was a cloudy spot
  Somewhere within her sky;
Nothing was ever quite "just right,"
  She used to say, and sigh.

And yet her sister, strange to say,
  Whose lot was quite the same,
Found something pleasant for herself
  In every day that came.
Of course, things tangled up sometimes
  For just a little while;
But nothing ever "stayed all wrong,"
  She used to say, and smile.

So one girl sighed and one girl smiled,
  Through all their lives together;
It didn't come from luck or fate,
  From clear or cloudy weather.
The reason lay within their hearts,
  And colored all outside;
One chose to hope and one to mope,
  And so they smiled and sighed.

Thrifty Willie.

It is said that the "Willie" of the following story was the now famous Thomas A. Edison.

Willie was always asking for pennies, and finally his mother, losing patience, said:

"Willie, from now till the end of summer you must never once ask me for pennies, for you will not get them that way. Whenever I think it is wise to do so I shall give you pennies without your asking.

But Willie had not the patience to wait until his mother saw fit to supply him with pennies, so he secretly planned a way of making money.

Presently his mother began to notice that Willie seemed to have plenty of pennies. She said nothing, however, but resolved to watch him closely.

One afternoon she observed Willie entertaining a crowd of boys in the garden. On approaching the noisy youngsters, what was her amazement to find Willie calmly swallowing a worm—a slimy, wriggling, horrible worm!

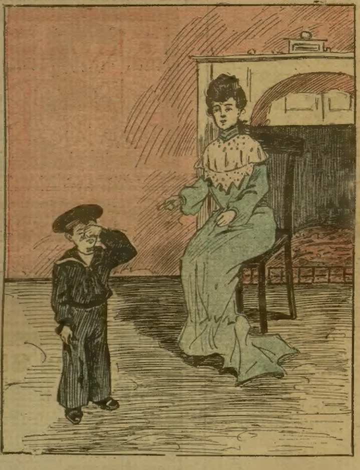
Behind him, tacked upon the fence was this poster:

I WILL EAT:

One little worm for	2c.
One big worm for	3c.
One little caterpillar for	4c.
One big caterpillar for	7c.
One tadpole for	9c.

The mystery was explained. There was the way Willie had earned his wealth of pennies.

IN TOO GREAT A HURRY.



Mother—Pants torn again, eh?

Tommy—I couldn't help it, mother. While I was falling from the tree I hadn't time to take them off.

An Elephant Motorist.

Elephants are among the cleverest performing animals, and after a little training can be made to understand commands given in three different languages. That seems wonderful, doesn't it? They are very musical in their tastes, to judge by their trumpeting at all events, and yet an elephant has been known to act as the leader of a band, marking time perfectly with his baton, while another elephant played the big drum.

One of these big animals, now being shown in London, drives a motor car, wearing a regular motorist's cap and pair of goggles. He manages the steering gear with his trunk, and the brake with his right foot; and he doesn't seem to have a bit of trouble with the big machine, which is, of course, specially constructed so that he has a seat in the back. In fact, he uses more discretion in running his machine than do some human beings.

Let God Do It.

Little Evelyn, who wished to take a walk with one of her friends, was told she must remain at home to take care of her little sister. She replied, "Mamma, you say God takes care of me; let Him take care of Alice a while."

About Marmosets.

Marmosets are too expensive and too delicate to make very good pets for children, but they are the cunningest little things in the world. Probably you have seen them in the animal stores. They are very, very small monkeys, you know, and come from South America. As to disposition, they are both gentle, tame and intelligent. As you know, they are only the size of squirrels, but their faces are owlish, so old and wise.

BEAR HAD THE TOOTHACHE.

A bear had got the toothache very badly
  (I only tell the story I have heard,
    So don't, I humbly pray,
    Be hard on me, and say,
  "The whole affair is totally absurd.")

A bear had got the toothache very badly,
  And to his kind and gentle mother said:
    "It's all this side the jaw"
    (And he touched it with a paw);
  "I wish 'twas on the other side instead!"

Now, by and by the bear, I'm glad to mention,
  Of all this pain could find no little trace,
    But scarce a week had flown
    When he murmured with a groan:
  "I've got it on the other side the face!

"I should'nt mind at all if I could shift it
  To where it was a little while ago.
    For oh, it seems to me
    That the place for pain to be
  Is where you haven't got the pain, you know."

Now if you think this bear a little silly,
  And laugh at what he ventured to suggest,
    O wait, I beg you, do
    Till you've had the toothache, too,
  And tell me then which side you like it best.

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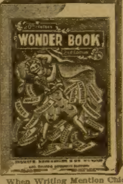

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